



Field Guides Tour Report

COLORADO GROUSE II 2021

Apr 17, 2021 to Apr 27, 2021
Tom Johnson & Doug Gochfeld

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



A Greater Sage-Grouse flies over its lek on our final morning of the tour, with some of the beautiful landscape of North Park in the background. Photo by participant Henry Schaefer.

Colorado is a spectacular place, so it was only fitting that one of our first tours back from the long pandemic-caused hiatus was to this land of endless plains, resplendent mountains, and funky chicken dances. Our route took us in a figure eight around Colorado, into Kansas, through Nebraska, and even featured a brief dip into Utah.

Starting out in Denver, we made our way south, stopping at Prospect Lake in Colorado Springs, which was chock full of migrant waterbirds. We also had excellent close-up views of Western Bluebirds around the lake edge, and our first views of migrating Franklin's Gulls on their way from southern South America to their breeding territories in the plains of the American and Canadian west. Our final birding of the evening was focused on the globally rare Mountain Plover, but also featured bonus birds such as a staggeringly close Golden Eagle. We started out our next morning by heading east from Pueblo, stopping for southwestern species like Curve-billed Thrasher and Canyon Towhee. Moving on towards the complex of lakes near Ordway, we had fantastic comparisons of Western and Clark's grebes, Burrowing Owl, more Franklin's Gulls, two separate Ferruginous Hawk sightings, and several Snowy Plovers, and this was before we made it to Lake Cheraw. Lake Cheraw had another barrage of interesting birds, from out-of-habitat Townsend's Solitaire and Western Scrub-Jays, to a scarce migrant Whimbrel making its way north to the tundra. A large flock of ~250 Yellow-headed Blackbirds was making an unforgettable cacophony as we made our way out of the lake. From here, we set our sights on Kansas, having roadside experiences with a pair of Chihuahuan Ravens and a Rough-legged Hawk along the way.

The reason we were heading all the way to Kansas wasn't just to add another state to our list, it was in order to see the declining and range restricted Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Our first lek experience of the tour was an interesting one, with a spurt of gorgeous sunshine early on before the clouds from the impending weather system arrived and the wind picked up. We then made our way up to the NW and back into Colorado, where we would visit the Lessers' larger cousins on a lek outside Wray. The unseasonal blizzard overnight laid down a carpet of snow over the lek. The Greater Prairie-Chickens were a little bit late in getting their gregarious displays started, but eventually they did get down to their dancing in the winter wonderland-cape. We then made our way west through the Pawnee National Grasslands, coming upon a mega flock of around a THOUSAND Thick-billed Longspurs on our way down to Denver.

The next day was devoted to making our way from Denver through the mountains and down into the Gunnison Basin, but we jammed in a lot of birding on this day, with perhaps the most impressive single day list of fancy target species of the trip. We started out at a windy, foggy Loveland Pass, just under 12,000 feet in elevation. We were here to search for the challenging White-tailed Ptarmigan, and we eventually pulled a couple out, despite their incredible white-on-white camouflage. From here, we headed over to a finch fiesta in Silverthorne, with a flock of 300 Rosy-finches of 4 taxa coming to feeders, as well as Red Crossbill and Pine Grosbeak. We then dropped down in elevation and headed into the town of Buena Vista for a delightful lunch. For dessert, we went searching for the pink-faced, crow-like Lewis's Woodpecker, but we got waylaid by a juvenile Northern Goshawk on the way to seeing a pair of these woodpeckers. We still had time to search for another specialty woodpecker, and at Monarch Pass we connected with an American Three-toed Woodpecker, as a great cap to a fantastic day. The next morning was our lek viewing opportunity for the very range restricted Gunnison Sage-Grouse, which we had some reasonable views of, especially considering the Golden Eagles that were causing a ruckus in the area. An afternoon trip to the awe-inspiring Black Canyon of the Gunnison not only produced awe, but a wonderfully confiding and amusing Dusky Grouse. Black Canyon was good enough for another visit in the morning light the next day, which awarded us singing Slate-colored Fox Sparrow, Juniper Titmouse, and excellent light on the gorgeous geology.

It was then off to the Northwest, and to the lower elevations of Mesa County. Highline Lake State Park had a fun combination of shorebirds, waterbirds, and gulls, and the sage-brush desert had some more Sage Thrashers as well as a fancy Long-nosed Leopard-Lizard. The main event here though, was another impressive geologic feature - Colorado National Monument. Our journey through the monument and nearby neighborhoods (including feeders of some friends of Field Guides) produced Gambel's Quail, Virginia's Warbler, Mountain Bluebirds building a great nest in a rock wall, and three of only a few hundred Desert Bighorn Sheep in the state. In addition to these great sightings, we got to enjoy the wonderful scenery along the 26 mile-long park road before heading north back into the snowy mountains of the north.

From Steamboat Springs we made a morning excursion in search of Sharp-tailed Grouse, and found several at a very entertaining dispersed lek, through which a troop of three Coyotes marauded at one point. A male Dusky Grouse was even taking in the scene from an adjacent hill side, several Swainson's Hawks were around, and Sandhill Cranes were displaying along the road as well. On our way out, we also found a couple of Yellow-bellied Marmots in the vicinity of some truly impressive Beaver handiwork. Then over Rabbit Ears Pass it was, picking up an inquisitive Canada Jay along the way, and down into North Park for our stay in the town of Walden. While in North Park, we saw Least Chipmunks, several Moose, and White-tailed Jackrabbit, but of course, the main events here were avian. Some of the group came out for a nocturnal excursion, and in addition to a couple of Red Foxes, we were treated to astonishingly good views of the usually secretive Boreal Owl- amazing! Our final lekking experience dark and early the next morning was that of the huge Greater Sage-Grouse, and we were treated to a good show by these alien-like breeding males and their inflatable lemon yellow air sacs, royal white ruffs, and spiky tails.

Even our drive back to Denver was productive on the avian front, as we added Barrow's Goldeneye and a drop-dead gorgeous Williamson's Sapsucker on the way into town. The final dinner provided a great way to re-live the many high points of our adventure, and both Tom and I (and seemingly everyone in the group) agreed that we couldn't have hoped for a more considerate, fun, and interesting group, despite the various challenges of being on a tour while there were still many pandemic-related restrictions around. On behalf of Tom, and all of us at Field Guides, thanks for joining us for this whirlwind tour through one of our favorite regions in the country, and we sincerely hope to see you in the field again soon.

-Doug Gochfeld

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

SNOW GOOSE (*Anser caerulescens caerulescens*) – A flock of eleven youngsters slumbering on an island in Walden Reservoir weren't in a hurry to make their way north, since they don't breed until they are at least two years old. At this date, adult Snow Geese are much farther north, looking to get a jump on their short Arctic summer nesting season.

ACKLING GOOSE (*Branta hutchinsii*) – A flock of these small, short-billed, small-headed white-cheeked geese was still lingering on a pond right in the middle of Fort Morgan, where we got great comparisons between them and their larger Canada Goose cousins.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Widespread and common in small groups throughout our travel.

TUNDRA SWAN (WHISTLING) (*Cygnus columbianus columbianus*) – A rarity on this tour. Two young birds were a nice surprise at a very birdy farm pond as we made our way from Pawnee southwest towards Denver.

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – A few in the eastern part of our route, including during our brief sojourn in Nebraska.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Fairly common on water bodies large and small.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – Our second of the "teal in name only". Cinnamon Teal, as you might infer based on their bill structure, feeding behavior, and wing pattern, are actually more closely related to Northern Shoveler than Green-winged Teal. The same is true of Blue-winged Teal, their close relatives. We had a very good tour for Cinnamon Teal, including many of the striking males.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – Very common throughout our journey, often in the company of one or both of the preceding "teal" species.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Another common one throughout.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Seen on several of our days, but never in large flocks.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Widespread, as ever, around the state. Small numbers on most large water bodies and pairs on many small bodies of water that we drove by.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Only encountered this elegant dabbler a couple of times. We had our first good looks at Loloff Reservoir, with the largest number being at Walden Reservoir.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Widespread in small numbers.

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – Good views in direct comparison to Redhead at Loloff Reservoir, and then a pile of them at Walden Reservoir.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – Another one that was fairly widespread, with repeated chances at good views of both males and females.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – Several spots, including Wray, Meeker, and Walden Reservoir.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – On Lake Cheraw we counted no fewer than 8 individuals of this species, which is by far the rarer of the two scaup species on this tour route (and indeed is a write-in).

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – Widespread, with individuals at several of the reservoirs we visited over the first few days, as well as many at Walden Reservoir.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – A few lingerers scattered around, with the best looks being at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Seen in ones and twos a couple of times early on (including at Cheraw Lake). Then we got to Windy Gap Reservoir, where we had double digits, including some really dapper males, one of which spent a little bit of time demonstrating its wacky head-snapping courtship display.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – Always a tough one to track down on our route, we found a couple of pairs at Windy Gap Reservoir, where we could directly compare them to their Common Goldeneye congeners.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Prospect Lake, Good Spring Creek, and Walden Reservoir.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Several water bodies over the first four days.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (*Callipepla gambelii*) – Good views just outside Colorado National Monument, including one loudly vocalizing from a perch on top of a rooftop weathervane.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Fairly common in the plains, and we encountered several in fields between Kansas and Wray.

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GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – These larger-than-life grouse are the tour finale, and with good reason. The views we had of these big boys showing off on the roadside lek in North Park was a perfect way to wrap up our grouse dance watch party.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus minimus*) – One of the most range-restricted birds in the United States of America, we were worried when daybreak broke on the lek to reveal a Golden Eagle and no grouse. Eventually though, the need to show off their wares to the lady grouse, and throw those thick dreadlocks around for all to see won out, and we got to see some displaying males amidst the thick sagebrush.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus leucura altipetens*) – We were running out of time on our first visit to Loveland Pass, when Tom miraculously spotted a couple of these big balls of white-on-white hunkering down in snow in a patch of protruding willow branches. Given the signs in that patch (and lack thereof surrounding it), this pair could have been in that spot for a couple of days. Amazing birds, and a highlight for many folks. The hunt for the ptarmigan and the resulting sighting was cited as one of the top moments of the trip for Kevin, Deborah, Wayne, Susan, and Paula.

DUSKY GROUSE (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – Oh what a bittersweet tale was woven into the tapestry this year's tour by Dusky Grouse. On our evening visit to Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, we encountered a roadside Dusky Grouse. As if this encounter wasn't good enough, we found a place to pull off the road and walked back to get looks from outside the van, and were treated to one of the most entertaining avian interactions anyone in the group had ever experienced. This male was defending its stretch of prime roadside real estate against all comers, be they bipeds, baseball caps, or automobiles. A woman got out of one vehicle to try and usher the grouse off the road so the car could pass safely, and the grouse ended up chasing her (laughing and shrieking) back into the car. Eventually, Gus (as he was christened by some in the group) had a close examination of most of us in turn by the time we had to leave him for the evening. Sadly, on our return the next morning, we found Gus close to where he had been the evening before, but having been struck and killed by a vehicle shortly before (he was still warm). It was both a fascinating look into just how possessed these grouse can be by the instinct to hold territory and mate, and a cautionary tale about the dangers of fast driving in wild spaces. A few days later we did encounter another male on the slope overlooking the Sharp-tailed Grouse lek near Steamboat Springs, and this one was much less amped up, and seemed to be content to just watch events unfold below it. Despite the final outcome of the Gus story, the magic of the evening before propelled Dusky Grouse to be the top vote-getter for top moments of the trip, making onto the lists of more than half the group.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – We watched their funky wings-out, tail-shaking, stomping dance moves at some distance, but for a long time. They surely have one of the most entertaining courtship displays of any bird in North America, and watching them chasing females around the farm fields and grasslands outside Steamboat was a delightful experience. This experience got a little more spice added to it when some Coyotes stalked their way through the various display areas, trying (unsuccessfully) to opportunistically grab a grouse or two.

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS) (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – The show got started late this year due to the snow cover from a few hours prior to our arrival, and freezing temperatures at dawn. However, when the males did finally get going, it was a fantastic experience watching these chickens dance in the snow, kicking up lots of powder as they showed off their moves.

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – One of the more magical experiences was being in the blinds under a ceiling of stars and waiting for the Lesser Prairie-Chickens to start talking. When they did begin to vocalize, it was still a starry night out, and listening to them start to get ramped up under the night sky was a real treat. Once dawn broke, their jumping, clucking displays were revealed, and entertainment was had by all!

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Several locations through the tour, often while we were in transit. The male displaying to several females along Hanover Road on our first afternoon must not have realized that there was a Golden Eagle perched just over the hill.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – These cute stout-billed grebes were at Lake Cheraw, Fort Morgan, Meeker.

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – Normally scarce on this route, we encountered them on four different days this year, including at Lake Cheraw and in a small roadside pond near the Wray Fish Hatchery.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Encounters on many bodies of water included some obscenely close looks at bright breeding plumage individuals at Lake Cheraw.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Their migration was clearly in full swing, and we saw them in good numbers on water bodies of the plains, the mountains, and the desert.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – Distant birds on Lake Meredith and Highline Lake paled in comparison to our up close and personal experience with side-by-side comparisons of Clark's Grebe with their close Western Grebe cousins on Lake Henry.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Yup, believe it or not. [I]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – These introduced columbids were unheard of in Colorado less than thirty years ago, but now they are the most conspicuous dove (aside from Feral Pigeons) throughout much of the state.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Our only native dove was common throughout the trip, but not as common as Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Some of these exceptionally fast aerialists were zipping around above their breeding cliffs at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and the Colorado National Monument.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*) – One or two were coming to Carol and Dave's feeders, but they were usually quickly chased away by the domineering male Broad-tailed Hummingbird.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycercus*) – We heard the wing noise of an adult male at BCGNP and Genesee Park, but got to see one holding territory from the top of a conifer in the shadow of Colorado National Monument.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – Where there was water, there was a good chance there were coots. We had them at various wet areas large and small on eight days.

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – At least one was at the farm pond at Montrose, and then we got into their breeding habitat once we came to the northern part of the mountains, especially in the Steamboat and North Park areas.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Small numbers (no more than three at any location) at Loloff, Mack Mesa Lake, and Walden Reservoir

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – These long, elegant, leggy shorebirds with their delicately recurved bills greeted us at several of our birding stops, including Loloff Reservoir, where we saw more than a hundred scattered around this unassuming farm pond!

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

SNOWY PLOVER (NIVOSUS) (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) – We had at least five at the nearly dry (and therefore great habitat for these guys) Holbrook Reservoir on our way east.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A scarce migrant in this region at this season, so it was a surprise to find one foraging at the edge of one of the tiny remaining pools of water on Holbrook Reservoir.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – The most frequently encountered shorebird during our trip. They're mostly on breeding territories at this point, unlike most of their long-distance migrant shorebird cousins, so the largest group we saw was five.

MOUNTAIN PLOVER (*Charadrius montanus*) – We spotted a pair on our very first afternoon on ranch-land southeast of Colorado Springs, along Hanover Road.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – A surprise was a migrant mixed into a flock of Marbled Godwits on the muddy island at Cheraw Lake. After we viewed it for a short while, it took flight alone, and gave us a nice flyby as it ascended into the sky, departing the lake for the next leg of its spring journey to the tundra.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – We experienced these in several different contexts. During our day driving southwest towards Denver, we had several on territory in the Pawnee Grasslands, then a single migrant thinking about landing in Loloff Reservoir, and a short time later we saw a flock of 57 of them very high up in active migration, which was super cool. The final one was a bird migrating over the extensive sagebrush desert outside Mack.

MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – 47 of these were among the delightful spread of birds at Lake Cheraw, and then we had a couple of small groups, including one group of arriving migrants, at Mack Mesa Lake.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – One was on the shore right alongside the road at Lake Henry, and then there was also one amongst the Least Sandpipers at Mack Mesa Lake.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Several wet spots along the way.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – Two of these more easterly distributed shorebirds were on a small pond at the Wray Fish Hatchery, and allowed close approach and study. A pleasant surprise, as this species is uncommon in Colorado.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – We had some distant ones out on the far away puddle that was a poor excuse for a lake at Holbrook Reservoir. We greatly improved our experience with the species a week later though, with the cooperative flock at Mack Mesa Lake.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – One hunkered on the mud shore of the farm pond in Montrose, and also at the roadside pond outside Wray, and at the almost totally dry Fravert Reservoir.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – An excellent adult female was stalking around the wet mud and swimming in the shallow water in the midst of our excellent waterbird experience at Mack Mesa Lake at Highline Lake State Park.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – A nice surprise on another bird-laden farm pond, this time right on the outskirts of Montrose.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Lake Henry, Wray Fish Hatchery, and Walden Reservoir were among the venues that hosted these long-billed, lanky tringas.

WILLET (WESTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – A flyby at Goodland was our only encounter with this species until we reached the last two days of the tour. Then we had great studies of individuals in both breeding and winter plumage at Walden Reservoir, and then a trio on the far shore of Windy Gap the next day.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – This is a species that showed better than normal, perhaps in large part due to the later dates of the tour this year- we saw small numbers of migrants on seven of the ten days we were birding in Colorado.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Lake Henry provided a few early on in the tour, and then we had double digits at Mack Mesa and Highline Lakes five days later.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Migrants in some dynamic action at Prospect Lake in Colorado Springs, and then really nice views around the feedlot ponds at Lake Meredith, as well as several days later at Mack Mesa Lake, where we were able to compare them directly to the dark-headed Bonaparte's Gulls.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – A few on various water bodies over the first couple of days of the trip, and then over 100 at Highline Lake State Park and Mack Mesa Lake.

CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – A few before we got to North Park (including a migrant flock of adults at Highline Lake State Park), but once at North Park we got to see them at a raucous breeding colony during our windy visit to Walden Reservoir.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – One adult at Cheraw Lake.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – A duo in crisp breeding plumage at Highline Lake.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – On several bodies of water through the trip.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – These behemoths were seen on several occasions, but by far our best and most prolonged experiences were the flocks of pelicans flying to and fro and over our heads at Walden Reservoir.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Almost every day of the tour.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Distant on their breeding island in Walden Reservoir.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – A couple of brief encounters while driving were surprisingly our only run-ins with this species.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen on every single day of the tour.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Here and there, including on a nest in Rifle.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – This was a great tour for Golden Eagle- we saw the species on 8 of our 10 days. The atypically confiding bird perched right next to the vehicles at Hanover Road was our first, and closest, but we also had excellent views of them in flight, including both adults and immatures, with the closest flight views being above the breathtaking gorge at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – Seen on the majority of days, including birds performing their acrobatic sky dancing flight display on a couple of occasions.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – One over George's feeders, and a few in northbound migration, both at BCGNP, and Genesee Park.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – A couple around, including at Wray and an adult male perched nicely over the scenic Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) – One of the most surprising, and awesome encounters of the trip. As we got out of the vehicles to look for Lewis's Woodpecker in Buena Vista, an American Crow was dive-bombing a bird in a nearby spruce tree. When we got binoculars on the bird, it turned out to be an immature Northern Goshawk. We watched this interaction for a while, and then the goshawk flew off, being barraged by multiple crows as it went. Our group re-found it nearby in the neighborhood, and watched it as it tried unsuccessfully to keep a low profile and avoid the ire of the crows. It eventually flew back in the direction from whence it had come, with what had grown to a battalion of crows in hot pursuit. This is a bird we rarely see on the tour, despite them being sparsely distributed throughout the mountains of Colorado, so it was a special treat to see this bird at all, let alone witness this interesting interaction.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Many along our route, including several on nests.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Their migration was well underway during the tour, and there were also some birds that had likely already arrived on their territories. We got to see the full spectrum of color morphs, from light, to dark, to every shade of brown in between, including a rusty one that Bob spotted chasing around insects or rodents in a distant field while we birded near Steamboat.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – One of the few species which we saw on every single day of the tour.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We had a nice light morph circling alongside the road as we drove out Rt. 96 heading out towards our destination in Kansas.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*Buteo regalis*) – Our first arrived at Lake Meredith just as we were leaving, and then circled up high into the stratosphere as we watched. Then, a little while later, we had one circling over us at mostly dry Holbrook Reservoir as we walked back to the vehicles there. Finally, those watching Lesser Prairie-Chickens in the stock trailer blind watched a Ferruginous Hawk fly through the lek just before we left, making the chickens hunker down and disappear into the sparse vegetation.

Strigidae (Owls)

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – Henry was hot on the trail of seeing one in Kansas, and we ended up seeing a total of three in our less than 24 hours in the state. We also had our usual ear tuft and a single eyeball friend in Wray, and Bob spotted one taking shelter in a rock crevice on the opposite side of the road while we were looking at the small pond in Meeker.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – A couple of these peeking out of their burrows on opposite sides of the road near Lake Meredith.

BOREAL OWL (RICHARDSON'S) (*Aegolius funereus richardsoni*) – WOW!! A few folks decided to burn the candle on both ends and come out for a night expedition, and we were treated to a magical experience with one of these under the stars and a nearly full moon in the mountains surrounding North Park.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – One at the river crossing in Nebraska, and another at a stream crossing in Walden.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – A drop-dead gorgeous male was our last addition to the trip as we headed back to Denver on our very final birding stop of the tour. It had clearly been using one of the trees it visited for a long, long time, judging by the number of cavities in said tree.

RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – Our best experience was a fairly close bird at Buena Vista, while we were already ogling an awesome pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers and a Pygmy Nuthatch.

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – One of the coolest woodpeckers there is. We saw a couple in Buena Vista, watching them fly around in crow-like fashion and then watching one flycatching from the top of a spruce tree.

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides dorsalis dorsalis*) – Excellent views of a very curious and confiding individual on Monarch Pass. This was a lifer for several folks, and we couldn't have asked for better views!

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Dryobates pubescens*) – Nebraska, Wray Fish Hatchery.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Dryobates villosus orius*) – Silverthorne and Black Canyon.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – A few flickers seen early on weren't seen particularly well, and at least the one in Nebraska could have been a Yellow-shafted.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – Widespread in the mountainous part of our route.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Another of the very few every-day birds, it is heartening to see so many out west, given how much the population has declined across the eastern United States.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – A male was perched in the distance while we parsed through the dense sagebrush habitat for a glimpse of some Gunnison Sage-Grouse dreadlocks.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Along a lower lying, drier part of the Gunnison River, as we drove from Montrose to Grand Junction.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – One of these regional scarcities at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Widespread but not abundant over the first half of the tour, with several at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Seen in several locations across every day of the first half of the tour, including a pair displaying to each other adjacent to windy Lake Meredith.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

CANADA JAY (ROCKY MTS.) (*Perisoreus canadensis capitalis*) – An intimate experience with a curious one in the dense conifer forest at Rabbit Ears Pass.

STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR) (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – We saw these on several days when we were around conifers and topography. An avian contestant for best combination of blue tones, if you sensed Doug getting extra excited each time one was around, it was because it was his primary "spark bird."

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – At least two very out of place birds at Lake Cheraw(!), and then several in more appropriate habitats, especially around BCGNP.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Charismatic, sharp birds, and with us every day of the tour but one.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Every day except for the two days involving Kansas.

CHIHUAHUA RAVEN (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – A scarce bird in Colorado, whose distribution is further clouded by the difficulty in separating them from their more common cousins. We saw a couple of these small, short-winged, flappy ravens cavorting on the plains of eastern Colorado, a bit north of the Arkansas River (southwest of Haswell), which is the stronghold for the species within the state, and at the very northern edge of the species' overall range.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Widespread, and encountered whenever we were anywhere near the mountains.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Brief view along the entrance road to BCGNP, and then views in a tree right outside the entrance to the hotel in Steamboat.

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*) – Most of our high elevation coniferous birding featured a few of these, with the largest flock being at Rabbit Ears Pass, though we had good studies of birds at the Moose VC as well, including views of one that looked to have some traits tending towards Black-capped (with which they occasionally hybridize).

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – Very nice views at Black Canyon and around Colorado National Monument of this sometimes difficult to eyeball species.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Seen on most days of the tour. Mostly in the lower lying and open areas of the tour (they were the most widespread and abundant bird during many of our open country driving legs), but we did see a small group of migrants land on the road right at the very top of snowy Loveland Pass, almost 12,000 feet above sea level!

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – The only two of these during our trip was on the first afternoon of our adventure, at Prospect Lake. They even perched in a tree, and allowing themselves to be one of the very first birds which we put in scopes during the tour.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A flock in excess of 25 birds was flying around Prospect Lake on our first afternoon, and then we didn't encounter them again until the second half of the tour, when we saw them on each of the final five days.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Prospect Lake, BCGNP, and Walden Reservoir.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – One flew by among the mixed-species swallow flock during our first birding stop of the tour, at Prospect Lake.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Our second most widespread swallow, though not a particularly high number in quite yet.
CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – A couple of brief encounters near Lake Meredith and then at Highline Lake State Park.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (INTERIOR) (*Psaltiriparus minimus plumbeus*) – Some had one or more of these outside our hotel on the east side of Denver, and everyone had the one or two coming to Carol's feeders.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Heard singing downslope from the entrance road to BCGNP. [✱]

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – One migrant in the trees at Wray Fish Hatchery, and then a female hanging out on the side of the roof buttresses at the Moose VC.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) – One along the entrance road to Black Canyon of the Gunnison was our only encounter.

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – We progressively improved our looks and experiences, from brief views (as they were not our focus during the finch flurry!) at Silverthorne, to an interesting and very active bird at Buena Vista, to finally one that perched on the same spot in a branch for multiple minutes, surely setting an all time record for diurnal motionlessness for the species, and in the process giving full-frame scope views, and seconds, to anyone who pleased to take it up on the offer.

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*) – A very skittish migrant out in the sagebrush desert outside Mack was our only individual of the tour!

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – Heard on a couple of occasions (Wayne had the first), though we didn't get a cooperative one this year.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Really nice views along the San Miguel River, and a few folks picked their way down the slope to the riverbank to see the face and bill looking out from a hole in the big nest ball under a bridge!

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Almost every day, but miraculously missed on our Lesser Prairie-Chicken day, when we drove Kansas-Nebraska-Colorado. [I]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP) (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – One of the southwestern specialties whose range we just nick on our first morning of birding, east of Pueblo.

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – A nice pair on our very first morning of birding, then a surprise one at a farm pond in Montrose, and several teed up at a more conventional sagebrush habitat along the Utah border.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – Great views right off the bat at Prospect Lake in Colorado Springs, and then more good views at a couple of other spots, including notably during our early morning stop at Colorado National Monument.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – Is there a better blue than male Mountain Bluebird blue? It could be credibly argued that there is not. We had some splendid experiences with these splendid birds, including the pair attending their nest in natural rock cavity high up near the Colorado National Monument VC.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) – An exceptionally out-of-place one was seen briefly by some at Lake Cheraw, and an exceptionally cooperative one was acting like a bluebird and perching on large rocks next to the street in Buena Vista. We also had some views in their more typical montane and coniferous habitats, including at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – One of our few sweeps- seen and heard on every day of the tour!

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – We encountered these during a restroom stop in Goodland, a lunch stop in Rifle, and during a hotel drop-off in Steamboat Springs, but nowhere else!

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Though some insisted that House Sparrows do not, in fact, exist, we did have the (mis?)fortune of encountering plenty, though most of our dedicated birding locations were absent these. [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – A few flyovers, but perched views at Lake Henry and Wray.

Eringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

EVENING GROSBEEK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – A big ol' flock of these was serenading our eardrums upon our arrival to George's feeders. These distinctive burry vocalizations belonged to the resident population, known as Type 4 (subspecies *C.v.warreni*). Once we were out of the vans, we got some great looks at several, including some brightly plumaged males, and even got some looks at the really interesting (if you can see it) pattern of rump spotting of a female.

PINE GROSBEEK (ROCKY MTS.) (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – A male perched up side-by-side with a male Red Crossbill at Silverthorne offered a great size comparison of the two species, and then the confiding male at the Moose VC gave exceptionally good views.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (HEPBURN'S) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) – A couple of these fully gray-cheeked birds were mixed into the four-taxa rosy-finch bonanza up at the Silverthorne feeders.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – Of the taxa that we encountered, this is the taxon most similar to Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, and so we had to get really clean looks at the solid gray flares over their eyebrows to make sure we were

on them, and luckily several of them cooperated to give us good views.

BLACK ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte atrata*) – We got looks at several of these strikingly dark, cold-toned rosy-finches amidst the hordes of *Leucosticte* in Silverthorne. This species is the most conspicuously different, in terms of plumage, rosy-finch in the Americas.

BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte australis*) – Nearly a Colorado breeding endemic, this species comprised the vast majority of the three hundred rosy-finches in Silverthorne. Picking out the others from this more locally common species in overcast lighting conditions was the real trick.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Nearly every day of the tour, but we missed them on our Kansas/Nebraska/Colorado day early on. Lots of males singing in habitated areas.

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – A nice mix of males and females in song coming to George's feeders this spring. This species is highly irruptive, and in some years there are very few in that section of the tour and they're only encountered in places like North Park. This year, it was the opposite for us.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – A couple of these were up in Silverthorne upon our arrival, and they were even doing some vocalizing, but they didn't make their diagnostic flight calls to allow us to identify them to subspecies/type. One male perched next to a Pine Grosbeak provided a unique comparison of the two species.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – George's and the surrounding vicinity were the only spots where we tracked down these small, streaky finches.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – A few of these were at George's feeder with the rest of the finch cornucopia.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*) – A few males mixed into the McCown's Longspurs, but relatively scarce during our visit to the Pawnee this year.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – This is perhaps the last time McCown's Longspur will appear on a Field Guides checklist, as the next Clements taxonomic update (which we follow), will change the name to Thick-billed Longspur. This change was the first of the "Bird Names for Birds" effort, which aims to change all honorific common names of North American birds. No matter what you call this species however, it is awesome, and we were treated to an astonishing show of around a thousand individuals flying around between good breeding habitat and an apparently very seed-rich cultivated field at the Pawnee National Grasslands. Watching flocks of several hundred at a time wheel around the sky and descend upon the fields was really a special experience. An interesting note is that the vast majority of these birds seemed to be males, with only a couple of females detected.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla arenacea*) – One of the gray-faced western subspecies of Field Sparrow was in the snow alongside the road (and alongside a nesting Great Horned Owl!) as we made our evening foray onto the Bledsoe Ranch shortly after our arrival in Wray.

BREWER'S SPARROW (*Spizella breweri*) – One playing hard to get along the fence-line at IL Ranch Road.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – This is surely one of the strikingly plumaged sparrows on the continent, and a couple of them showed off their sharp duds to us on the morning of our visit to Colorado National Monument.

FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED) (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*)

DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – A cooperative one allowed for close comparison with Pink-sided Junco at the Wray Fish Hatchery. It also gets a mention as part of the ancestry of the "Cassiar" Junco at Moose Visitor Center. Cassiar Junco is generally considered to be a large hybrid population between Oregon Junco and Slate-colored Junco, a regular pairing where those two subspecies' ranges come into contact.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (OREGON) (*Junco hyemalis oreganus*) – We had brief and unsatisfactory views of pure Oregon Juncos a couple of times on tour, but we sure talked it about it plenty, since this was the parent species of two different intergrade juncos we saw at Moose VC- one a Slate-colored x Oregon hybrid (Cassiar Junco), and the other an apparent Oregon x Pink-sided hybrid!

DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED) (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – Encountered several times, encountering it first at the Wray Fish Hatchery, and then acquiring very good views at Colorado National Monument and the Moose VC.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – A couple of brief views before we got to North Park, and then excellent studies of several individuals of this mountain-dwelling subspecies at the Moose VC.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (ORIENTAL) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*) – One of these dark-lored birds was pointed out among the mass of pale-lored Gambel's by Tom at the Dakota Drive feeders.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – The common subspecies of White-crowned Sparrow in the places we go on tour, though we ran into fewer than usual this year, perhaps due to weather conditions during the first half of the tour.

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – Perhaps our most widespread non-junco sparrow. These were clearly on the move north through the plains during the first few days of our tour, so we had sporadic sightings, even away from their appropriate breeding habitat.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – A couple of individuals out by Steamboat Springs, and a very vocal one at Granby. These Song Sparrows were noticeably grayer and colder toned than the East Coast versions of Song Sparrows,

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*) – Very good views of this widespread denizen of the desert southwest and Mexico on our first birding morning, east of Pueblo.

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – We heard one calling repeatedly at Devil's Kitchen Trail at Colorado National Monument. [*]

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Black Canyon of the Gunnison was our best experience with these large, sneaky sparrows.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – The most memorable was the large flock of more than 200 individuals (all but one were adult males!!), just north of Cheraw Lake.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Their sweet song is one of the iconic sounds of the great plains, and we were serenaded by it throughout much of our trip.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Widespread and common, notably so on our morning near Steamboat Springs.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Widespread, but in small numbers.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Some good views of a few here and there (including near Steamboat Springs). The most perplexing was the particularly thin-billed female at the Moose VC, which initially threw us due to the conifer forest setting- an odd context for the species.

COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED) (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Widespread, though mostly absent in montane habitats.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Good numbers during the Kansas part of the tour, and then a few stragglers out by Wray and a bit farther west.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Leiothlypis virginiae*) – One of these newly arrived migrants was singing prominently along the road at Colorado National Monument. Unfortunately, it played hard-to-get when it came to getting visuals of it, though most folks at least got a glimpse of this highly mobile bird.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – A couple of very pretty breeding-plumaged males at Prospect Lake in Colorado Springs during our first birding stop of the tour should have been a harbinger of more of these common migrants to come, but that didn't end up being the case, and we only had another couple of very brief encounters of flybys later on in the trip.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – Nice views of a perfectly plumaged adult male which had likely just returned to its breeding territory along the entrance road to Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

MAMMALS

NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – Several of these around the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – This was the cottontail we encountered on the first few days of the tour, in the eastern plains. We also saw it in the shadow of Colorado National Monument, and some even in the parking lot of our final dinner venue in Denver!

WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus townsendi*) – Our first encounter was during the nocturnal expedition, when one eventually outpaced us into the darkness. Then the next morning, everyone got great views of a couple in the sagebrush flats after we departed the Greater Sage-grouse lek.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – One of these bolted out of roadside vegetation and sprinted across a field and out of sight while we were watching the longspur spectacle at Pawnee.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – Several of these tiny cuties running around the backyard of the Moose Visitor Center.

YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT (*Marmota flaviventris*) – One particularly chocolatey individual standing at attention along the roadside as we made our way north between Rifle and Craig. Then three in close proximity along the heavily beaver-dammed stretch of stream we passed during our morning birding outside of Steamboat Springs.

WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL (*Urocitellus elegans*) – Best and most memorable views were the one in the street at Buena Vista, the one perched atop a sage bush near the Utah border, and then the one on the close edge of the Greater Sage-Grouse lek in North Park.

THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) – Excellent views of this diminutive and intricately patterned ground squirrel alongside the road at the Pawnee.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – The conspicuous squirrel at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monument.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – Really nice, close views of an adorable one of these chipmunk-like squirrels at the campground at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – This was the widespread prairie dog species around Denver and on the eastern plains.

WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys leucurus*) – The areas we covered on our afternoon west of Grand Junction were populated with White-tailed Prairie Dogs, as was North Park.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – This was the prairie dog near Black Canyon of the Gunnison and around Montrose.

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*) – Our urban lake stops in Colorado Springs and Fort Morgan produced these charismatic and confiding squirrels, including one that was playing around under a car without the guy inside the vehicle having any clue of its presence there!

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – A couple of these were around the neighborhoods of Silverthorne, while we were mostly occupied with mountain finchpalooza.

BEAVER (*Castor canadensis*) – We drove by lots of Beavers, though they were all obscured by their widespread and well-built lodges. We saw some really good looking beaver meadows in some of the valleys we drove through.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – The second van had a nice broad daylight view of one on the train tracks just outside of the entrance to the Wray fish hatchery, and then the owling group saw Red Fox twice during our nocturnal excursion in the mountains surrounding Walden.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – A few were calling in the distance while we watched the leks at the Bledsoe Ranch and Coalmont. Our finest experience though, were three very healthy looking Coyotes with luxuriant coats that came loping across the field where the Sharp-tailed Grouse were lekking, and they gave some half-hearted chase to the grouse, eventually flushing every single one, and coming away empty-pawed (rest assured, the grouse came back in short order and resumed their wackiness).

AMERICAN MINK (*Mustela vison*) – An all-too-brief view of one swimming on the surface of a pond right next to us at the Wray fish hatchery. It swam over to the nearby reeds and weeds and it didn't re-emerge while we waited.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – We saw herds Elk at several locations (usually while we were in transit), including a few really nice views from various roads.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – The most widespread deer through the route, including some rather large herds.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Multiple herds of these as we drove east from Pueblo to Kansas, and then an individual on the outskirts of State Forest State Park, which helped give us our first four ungulate day.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – One of the specialties of North Park, we had five Moose (two young males together, a mother with a large calf, and another lone individual) along the valley's willow-lined streams. Walden certainly lived up to its billing as the Moose-viewing capital of Colorado!

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – These icons of the American West were abundant and widespread during our travels through Colorado and Kansas, and hearken back to a time when the plains were ruled by millions of individuals of an incredible diversity of four-legged fauna.

AMERICAN BISON (*Bison bison*) – The herd of these at Genesee Park is reintroduced there, and surrounded by a fairly small enclosure- but that is sadly the story of most of the population of American Bison in this day and age. The ones we saw at a distance as we drove by Rocky Mountain Arsenal are enclosed as well, but in an exponentially larger area.

BIGHORN SHEEP (ROCKY MOUNTAINS) (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*) – Several encounters with these cool rock-dwelling animals, mostly as we drove into the mountains west of Denver. One group of mothers and young, later on, was particularly confiding.

BIGHORN SHEEP (DESERT) (*Ovis canadensis mexicana/nelsoni*) – A very rare animal in Colorado. Of the world population of several tens of thousands, fewer than 600 live in the state. We were fortunate with prolonged views of a couple very close to the road in Colorado National

Monument.

Herps

LONG-NOSED LEOPARD LIZARD (*Gambelia wislizenii*) – This cool black and tan striped lizard was a first for most or all of the group (including the guides!) in the sagebrush desert of Mesa County.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 179 bird taxa and 27 mammal taxa