

FIELD REPORT

COLORADO GROUSE

APRIL 4–14, 2024



The Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek display was incredible and up-close! © Erik Bruhnke

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Every day of VENT'S 2024 Colorado Grouse tour was chock-full of exciting moments among the vast and wild landscape we explored. We enjoyed so much remarkable scenery, savored breathtaking lek experiences, and had an all-round fabulous time throughout the miles we drove. This tour had a unique charm, and it felt like there was a surprise around every corner, vista, and field we birded.

On the morning we departed Denver, we started our tour with a gorgeous Cooper's Hawk flying right over our van at the hotel parking lot. We checked out several areas for a plethora of prairie birds, upon heading east. While birding not far from a creek bed, we located a flock of Lark Buntings, an uncommon treat for the tour and a surprise off the bat! White-crowned Sparrows and Horned Larks provided ample studying and appreciating opportunities. As we birded along our first country road, we were greeted by possibly the friendliest and most inquisitive horses around. They came to check us out and greet us beyond the fence. We scored some great views of Great-tailed Grackles at a gas station visit shortly after, a species possible only in the eastern tier of this tour. A little later we enjoyed an incredible view of a stunning Ferruginous Hawk soaring right



This gorgeous Ferruginous Hawk flew right over our heads! © Erik Bruhnke



Friendly horses that came to say hello © Erik Bruhnke

over our heads; meanwhile, almost a thousand Thick-billed Longspurs fluttered among the vast fields. We picked out a Chestnut-collared Longspur among the lively longspur commotion and enjoyed Mountain Plover through the scope as well. A brief visit to a nearby water treatment site brought forth two Yellow-headed Blackbirds among a gathering of Red-winged Blackbirds, and several duck species, too!

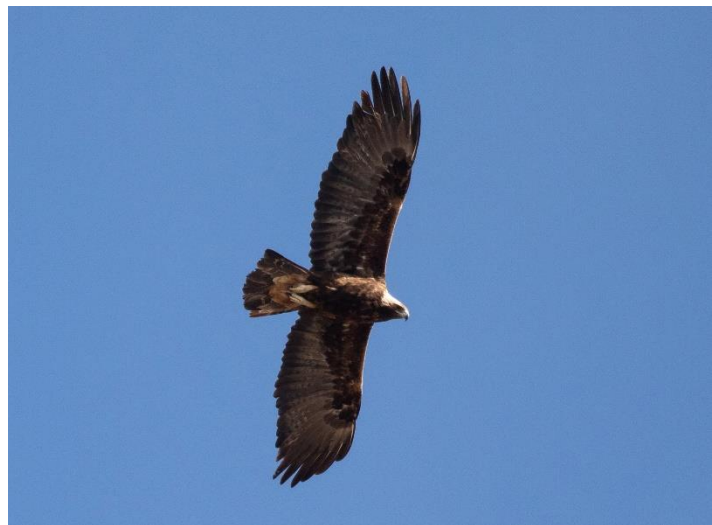


Lesser Prairie-Chickens in full display © Erik Bruhnke

An early morning the next day had us viewing Lesser Prairie-Chickens up close in Scott City. The many little, highly energized Lesser Prairie-Chickens darted after each other, males proudly shuffling and sprinting themselves back and forth, complementing their soft popping sounds and proportionately long pinnae. Several delicately plumaged females kept watch from around the lekking perimeter. It was downright magical! After a thrilling morning we explored Scott State Park, where we enjoyed an array of waterfowl, Eastern Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, and even a comparison of Cooper's Hawk vs Sharp-shinned Hawk (to name a few highlights). It was a great visit! A carefully driven, blustery drive to Wray had us enjoying a little break time and a fantastic dinner, fueling our morning of Greater Prairie-Chickens ahead.

The next morning we viewed the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek, and what a treat it was! The Greater Prairie-Chickens shuffled around, chattering and booming at each other. Their large, vibrant cheeks inflated rapidly. The blustery conditions from the multi-day windstorm were no match for their displays, and the chickens were seen well despite the wind! We were fortunate to view this grand display from inside the van through our extra large windows. Two Burrowing Owls were briefly seen as we were leaving the fantastic morning show. Later that morning we enjoyed the diverse birding at Stalker Lake State Wildlife Area. Among many waterbirds was a large flock of American White Pelicans taking shelter on the far end of the lake. Seeing both young and old Great Horned Owls nearby was a thrill. After this exciting birding whirlwind, we fueled our afternoon with delicious authentic Mexican cuisine and explored a good portion of the Pawnee National Grasslands.

We took full advantage of the eastern birds on this tour, starting our next morning out of Fort Collins, where a Blue Jay and a Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler were seen flying over our hotel parking lot. As we headed west into the mountains, we enjoyed incredible views of multiple American Dippers cheerfully bobbing along the river's edge, as well as going for a swim in search of food. The chilly, turbulent water is just what they need. A Townsend's Solitaire kept watch



Stunning Golden Eagle soaring past our group © Erik Bruhnke

over the river. Steller's Jays squawked their raspy calls among the pines. The sense of place was wondrous. A gathering of Pygmy Nuthatches and flyover Red Crossbills came into view a bit later, followed by a Golden Eagle flying over us! The timing of this tour coincided with the solar eclipse, and we took some time outside of our lunch to enjoy the stunning view of the moon overlapping the sun (with proper eye protection, of course)! A visit to the Moose Visitor Center offered a great comparison of Black-capped Chickadees and Mountain Chickadees, and also views of some dapper Cassin's Finches. Before we arrived in Wray we did some hawkwatching, producing some great views of a Swainson's Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, a zippy Peregrine Falcon, and three Red-tailed Hawks. A preliminary drive by the Greater Sage-Grouse lekking grounds in the late afternoon brought forth views of several females of this amazing species. A nighttime post-dinner excursion up in the mountains produced two different Boreal Owls that we heard calling among the calm, brisk, and serene air.

The next morning we headed out early and had a fabulous experience with Greater Sage-Grouse lekking beyond the limits of Walden. The massive grouse shuffled back and forth. Males gave the deep-toned displays, with the intense popping from their air sacs being heard through the van windows. They are a spectacular-looking bird, and the views and experience overall were great. Visiting the Walden Reservoir was high on the to-do list after breakfast, and we tallied thirteen duck species among a beautiful array of other birds nearby. The American Avocet was a treat, too. There was so much life nearby! Another magical morning ensued . . . Sandhill Cranes and Pinyon Jays were enjoyed on the drive west. We had a local and delicious dinner that night, with a few of the birders sampling some amazing-beer-to-write-home-about (for those who enjoyed microbrews), and had a pleasant outdoor checklist session before bed.



Greater Sage-Grouse displaying © Erik Bruhnke

Our next morning was another early one as we headed to a lekking location on private property. Throughout the morning we were surrounded by no fewer than 35 Sharp-tailed Grouse, with the males bowing and fiercely dancing among the clearings (at times walking feet from our vans). Their display was truly incredible, and our experience at the private ranch was fantastic. Their golden combs and purple air sacs were icing on



The Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek display was incredible and up-close! © Erik Bruhnke

the cake for their deep golden-brown details feathers. Distant Greater Sage-Grouse were appreciated simultaneously. The morning was wild and energy-filled in such a beautiful rural area. Later that morning we enjoyed Sage Thrashers, Western Bluebirds, a Say's Phoebe, and a surprise, unexpected Western Kingbird making its way through! A Cinnamon Teal was spotted just before we had lunch. Later that afternoon we enjoyed a visit with our friend Carol Ortenzio while birding her backyard. Gambel's Quail was a delight to see, as was a dapper Juniper Titmouse. A special thank you goes out to her for inviting us to visit her property!



One of the many incredible views at Colorado National Monument © Erik Bruhnke

A visit through Colorado National Monument was in store the next day. The cliffs and vistas were breathtaking to say the least. A Bewick's Wren complemented the Pinyon Jays and Juniper Titmice we came across. Several White-throated Swifts zipped past as Bushtits chattered in the nearby bushes. It was a special day of birding and sightseeing! The unique scenery alone is worth the visit. The aromatic oaks

and juniper thickets were home to so many beautiful birds. The Pinyon Jays seemed more locally abundant here this year than during last year's tour. Random coincidence? Slight irruption? We pondered as we birded and enjoyed the wondrous views.



White-throated Swifts zipping by. What a gorgeous species! © Erik Bruhnke

Throughout the afternoon and morning ahead we birded the legendary Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Despite solid efforts of searching, hiking, and listening, we unfortunately didn't come across the Dusky Grouse; however, there were so many other highlights with this pursued treasure hunt. Spotted Towhees and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays were seen well, as were the immense, vast cliffs. Mountain Cottontails delighted us as they fed around the oak thickets.

Our last morning started with a lek of very rare Gunnison Sage-Grouse—a treat to see, even at a distance. Sassy Black-billed Magpies called nearby. Up in the Silverthorne area, we had great views of both Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and a plethora of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches. Four dapper Pine Grosbeaks were appreciated, as were chatty Pygmy Nuthatches. We tried several times and places for White-tailed Ptarmigan throughout the best snowy krummholz habitat. Despite



Adorable Mountain Cottontail keeping watch © Erik Bruhnke

several searching attempts in the right places, the White-tailed Ptarmigan decided to lay low that afternoon.

As mentioned before, the sights and sounds of this tour were truly wonderful every day, and our daily treks were filled with shared smiles and awe. Special thanks to the landowners Bob Bledsoe, James Millensifer, and Ken Bekkedahl for the lek-viewing experiences we enjoyed on their properties. Another big thank you goes out to VENT birder and friend from over the years, Carol Ortenzio, for inviting us into her beautiful backyard to enjoy some pleasant birding. I'm already looking forward to next year's Colorado Grouse tour to explore expansive landscapes while savoring chickens, grouse, and so much more!



One of several gorgeous Mountain Bluebirds we saw! © Erik Bruhnke

Common Name	Scientific Name	
Waterfowl	Anatidae	
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Common, seen all but the first day of the tour among a variety of fields and waterways
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	Observed at Stalker Lake SWA and Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	Seen well at Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, Walden Reservoir, and the Big Bottom Viewpoint
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>	After some persistence at various waterways, we found five at Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail. Seen well!
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	One of the more common duck species of the tour. Seen at a variety of waterways.
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	Slightly more common than Northern Shoveler, often seen with Northern Shovelers
American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	Seen at Scott State Park, Walden Reservoir, and at the Big Bottom Viewpoint
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Observed every day among a variety of water areas
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	We found thirteen at Walden Reservoir
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Seen in the Arriba area as well as Walden Reservoir, and from the Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	Observed at the Walden Reservoir
Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>	Seen at Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, and at the Walden Reservoir
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Most abundant duck species of the tour, seen most days where water was present
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Seen at the Walden Reservoir
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Seen at the Burlington Water Treatment Plant, Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, and Walden Reservoir
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Observed at Stalker Lake SWA, Walden Reservoir, and along the Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Seen along the Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail, from Big Bottom Viewpoint, and at the Blue Mesa Reservoir
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	Two seen at the Blue Mesa Reservoir
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Seen just outside of the Gateway Natural Area, at the Big Bottom Viewpoint, and at the Blue Mesa Reservoir
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Seen at Burlington Water Treatment Plant, Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, Walden Reservoir, and at the Big Bottom Viewpoint
New World Quail	Odontophoridae	
Gambel's Quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	It was such a treat to see and hear them up close, at Carol Ortenzio's yard. Thanks, Carol!

Pheasants, Grouse & Allies	Phasianidae	
Ring-necked Pheasant (I)	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Heard while birding the fields east of Denver
Greater Sage-Grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	Truly outstanding experience with this species, both quite close and a distance. Seen both in an afternoon visit and an early-morning visit around Walden, and also seen west of Craig. The largest gathering around Wray consisted of 75 birds.
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	<i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	Scoped and seen near the Gunnison area. Although far, it was great to be in the presence of this species as songbirds serenaded the early morning air. We tallied 30 individuals.
Sharp-tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	An up-close view of an active lek was enjoyed outside of Craig. Truly breathtaking! We tallied 35 individuals.
Greater Prairie-Chicken	<i>Tympanuchus cupido</i>	Seen and appreciated very well at the Bledsoe Cattle Co. private property. Despite the strong winds that morning, we tallied ten individuals around us.
Lesser Prairie-Chicken	<i>Tympanuchus pallidicinctus</i>	Our first lek of the tour, seen incredibly well. Their popping sounds and energized strutting were mesmerizing. We tallied 24 individuals.
Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Observed at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and also at Scott State Park
Grebes	Podicipedidae	
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	One seen at the Walden Reservoir
Pigeons and Doves	Columbidae	
Rock Pigeon (Feral)(I)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Observed every day of the tour
Eurasian Collared-Dove (I)	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Observed every day of the tour, seen at a variety of open country areas/farming towns
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Seen every day
Swifts	Apodidae	
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	Seen both at the Colorado National Monument and also at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Such a gorgeous, speedy species!
Rails, Gallinules & Coots	Rallidae	
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	Seen at Scott State Park and also at Walden Reservoir
Cranes	Gruidae	
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	Seen a little east of Hayden as well as flying over Steamboat Springs area
Stilts & Avocets	Recurvirostridae	
American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	We found two at the Walden Reservoir

Plovers and Lapwings	Charadriidae	
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Seen many days of the tour, among open areas
Mountain Plover	<i>Anarhynchus montanus</i>	We found five of them near the Arriba area!
Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	Laridae	
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Seen at Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, Walden Reservoir, and at the Blue Mesa Reservoir
Cormorants	Phalacrocoracidae	
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	Observed at Scott State Park, Stalker Lake SWA, and the largest gathering was at Walden Reservoir
Pelicans	Pelecanidae	
American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	We found a big gathering at Stalker Lake SWA and also found many circling overhead at Big Bottom Viewpoint
Herons, Egrets & Bitterns	Ardeidae	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Seen along the outer edge of Walden, perched on a frozen pond
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Seen at Walden Reservoir, the Steamboat Springs area, and Loudy-Simpson Nature Trail
New World Vultures	Cathartidae	
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Common, observed every day
Osprey	Pandionidae	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Uncommon, observed around Fort Collins and also briefly west of Denver
Hawks, Eagles & Kites	Accipitridae	
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Great study of this species, while slightly higher up in elevation. Our first one was at Kelley Flats parking area, followed by outstanding views at Arapaho NWR. Great study took place around Craig, and the Colorado National Monument too
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	We tallied a total of nine Northern Harriers among vast prairies, two times at the prairie-chicken leks.
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Seen flying by at Scott State Park, just after seeing a Cooper's Hawk flying past!
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	One of the first birds of the tour, flying over our van as we departed our hotel in Denver
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Pretty common as far as raptors go, see all but three days
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Seen among vast prairies several times, on six different days
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Most common true bird of prey of the tour, seen all but one day. Wonderful study of the species' plumage variance!

Rough-legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	One was seen around Arapaho NWR, great to see this species just before it left the area for the north
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	With a little persistence on our first day, we had crushing views of this species. An adult soared right over us, as we enjoyed the masses of Thick-billed Longspurs!
Owls	Strigidae	
Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	We found an active nest in Wray! Two adults and one confirmed nestling!
Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Two were seen near the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek in Wray
Boreal Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	We heard two of them in the mountains. Even as a heard-only among the chilly, clear skies, it was magical to be in the presence of them!
Kingfishers	Alcedinidae	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	Seen at Scott State Park
Woodpeckers	Picidae	
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	One observed at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>	Observed at the Moose Visitor Center and also in the Silverthorne area
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	
(Red-shafted)	<i>Colaptes auratus cafer</i>	Most abundant woodpecker of the tour, observed on five different days. All Northern Flickers observed were red-shafted
Falcons & Caracaras	Falconidae	
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Seen every day of the tour. Great to see so many of these little stunners among the fields!
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One seen flying past us at Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge
Tyrant Flycatchers	Tyrannidae	
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	Nice study of this species, among five different days. A treat to see this beautiful, open-plains phoebe species!
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	Two were seen briefly flying by, west of Craig. It was an early observation for this species.
Crows, Jays & Magpies	Corvidae	
Pinyon Jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	A gorgeous jay species, seen west of Craig and also throughout the Colorado National Monument
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	Observed around the Gateway Natural Area entrance, at the Moose Visitor Center, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, and around Wilderrest

Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Seen several times around Fort Collins, including when we were loading the van up in the morning to depart the hotel!
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma woodhouseii</i>	We saw them several times at both the Colorado National Monument and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>	Seen every day we were in higher elevations (a total of six days). Such a flashy and charismatic bird!
Clark's Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	One was observed at McPhelemey Park
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Common, seen all but the very windy days at the beginning of the tour
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	A common sight once in higher elevations
Tits, Chickadees, & Titmice	Paridae	
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	Seen on two days, at Moose Visitor Center and Buena Vista
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>	Great views of this mountain-dwelling species on four different days. Considerably more common than Black-capped Chickadees
Juniper Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>	Seen well at Colorado National Monument and also at Carol's house!
Larks	Alaudidae	
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	A fairly common sight until only the highest elevations, noted on all but two days of the tour. Great study of this species in eastern Colorado
Swallows	Hirundinidae	
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	We found one in Scott City
Long-tailed Tits	Aegithalidae	
Bushtit	<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i>	We observed five of them throughout Colorado National Monument
Kinglets	Regulidae	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Corthylio calendula</i>	Observed at Carol's house! A fun treat to see.
Nuthatches	Sittidae	
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	We found one at the Moose Visitor Center
Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	Seen at four different locations in higher elevation, including Kelley Flats, Moose Visitor Center, Buena Vista, and around Wildernest
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	We found two at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP
Wrens	Troglodytidae	
Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	Such an earthy, beautiful species. We had four of them at Colorado National Monument

Mockingbirds & Thrashers	Mimidae	
Sage Thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	Wonderful scope view of this species west of Craig. An iconic specialist for the sagebrush landscape!
Starlings	Sturnidae	
European Starling (I)	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common, observed every day of the tour
Dippers	Cinclidae	
American Dipper	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>	Delightful scope views of this river-dwelling species. So fun to watch them bob and swim around! Seen in Poudre Canyon and also in Buena Vista
Thrushes & Allies	Turdidae	
Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	A gorgeous species, enjoyed at Scott State Park and Stalker Lake SWA
Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	Another gorgeous species, five seen all together throughout western Colorado
Mountain Bluebird	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>	Observed at Arapaho NWR, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, and at Wildernest. Amazing how they can make the sky look bland - such a beautiful bird!
Townsend's Solitaire	<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>	Seen throughout Poudre Canyon and also at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Common, seen every day of the tour
Old World Sparrows	Passeridae	
House Sparrow (I)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Common, seen every day of the tour
Finches, Euphonias & Allies	Fringillidae	
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	We found four at Wildernest, including one that perched out in the open for some awesome views!
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte tephrocotis</i>	One was seen at the feeding frenzy at Wildernest
Brown-capped Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte australis</i>	The most common Rosy-Finch species of the area - great views and study of this species at Wildernest
House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	Common. Noted every day except for the two windy days in the eastern prairies
Cassin's Finch	<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>	Wonderful views of this beautiful songster, with our best views at the Moose Visitor Center
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Seen and heard in Poudre Canyon and also at Wildernest
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>	We found a small group in the Buena Vista area. So chatty!
Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Spinus psaltria</i>	Nice views of this species while birding Carol's yard!

American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>	We found several in Wray
Longspurs & Snow Buntings	Calcariidae	
Chestnut-collared Longspur	<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>	Among the massive longspur gatherings we found one near Arriba
Thick-billed Longspur	<i>Rhynchophanes mccownii</i>	Incredible flocks of this species feeding near Arriba
New World Sparrows	Passerellidae	
Lark Bunting	<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>	Very uncommon to see on the tour - we located a group of eight of them in the prairies east of Denver, on the first day of the tour
Fox Sparrow	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>	We found one at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	
(Slate-colored Junco)	<i>J. hyemalis/carolinensis</i>	Observed in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
(Pink-sided Junco)	<i>J. hyemalis mearnsii</i>	Seen in Colorado National Monument and also at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP. A striking form of Dark-eyed Junco!
(Gray-headed Junco)	<i>J. hyemalis caniceps</i>	Great up-close views at the Moose Visitor Center and also around the Gunnison area
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	Common east of Denver at a variety of semi-brushy areas, also enjoyed in Carol's yard!
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>	Uncommon, seen at our first open-country birding spot east of Denver
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	We found two of them at different locations around Scott City
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	One seen around Gunnison
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	Awesome out-in-the-open study of this species several times at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. It was a treat to see them well!
Troupials & Allies	Icteridae	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	We found two in Burlington, uncommon among the many Red-winged Blackbirds!
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Common, a daily sight among grassland environments we visited
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Near-daily sightings for the tour
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Seen six of the days of the tour among the many open prairies we visited
Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Common east of Denver, noted on four days of the tour only while in the open/semi-open areas
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	Uncommon, enjoyed at several locations between Denver and Scott City, noted on two days of the tour
New World Warblers	Parulidae	

Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>	Observed at Fort Collins and also at the Moose Visitor Center
MAMMALS		
Squirrels, Prairie Dogs & Marmots		
Sciuridae		
Eastern Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>	We found one in Buena Vista
Least Chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>	Tiny and beautiful, seen at the birdfeeders at Moose Visitor Center
Wyoming Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus elegans</i>	Seen on two days around Walden area, quite close to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse leks!
Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>	Great out-in-the-open views of this species. Seen both on the ground (and atop an oak tree!) at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Black-tailed Prairie-Dog	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Several sightings in the prairies east of Denver, on two different days among our prairie-chicken leks and prairie drives
White-tailed Prairie-Dog	<i>Cynomys leucurus</i>	Seen on our last day of the trip, between Gunnison and Denver
Gunnison Prairie-Dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>	Seen well at the Elk Creek Visitor Center
Yellow-bellied Marmot	<i>Marmota flaviventris</i>	We saw one briefly on the high-elevation drive, before returning to Denver from the west
Kangaroo Rats	Heteromyidae	
Ord's Kangaroo Rat	<i>Dipodomys ordii</i>	One of these little sprites ran across the road while we were headed to the Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek!
Rabbits & Hares	Leporidae	
Eastern Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>	Several observed around Denver
Mountain Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>	Wonderful views of this adorable, high-elevation species at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
White-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus townsendii</i>	Seen while east and west of the Walden area
Dogs	Canidae	
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	Our first one was an interesting individual, likely a coywolf (coyote x wolf hybrid), seen around Arapaho NWR. Coyotes were also heard the morning of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse lek
Deer	Cervidae	
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>	Seen on the drive west of Walden. Fantastic views of this amazing animal, enjoying a meal of willow bushes
White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Several seen on two days while driving around north-central Colorado
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Seen on three different days along the Front Range

Elk	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Wonderful views of them along Craig and the Yampa River Valley area, and also seen while commuting into Gunnison and the drive back into Denver
Pronghorn	Antilocapridae	
Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	Common mammal to observe, noted on all but two tour days
Bison, Sheep & Goats	Bovidae	
Bighorn Sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	Scoped at a great distance (kudos to Kevin's spotting) at Colorado National Monument and also on the drive back into Denver from the west
Bovine		
Domestic Cow	<i>Bos taurus</i>	We saw a very friendly and curious gathering of cows checking out our vans out while on the Bledsoe Ranch!
Horse		
Domestic Horse	<i>Equus caballus</i>	Noted for our checklist, as we were greeted by possibly the most friendly horses ever (they were excited to see us while we birded)
REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS		
Plateau Fence Lizard	<i>Sceloporus tristichus</i>	Seen well at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
INSECTS		
Butterflies		
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	
Mourning Cloak	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>	