

Colorado Grouse Tour

Organized by Love Creek and Seven Ponds Nature Centers
with High Lonesome Bird Tours

April 17-25, 2011

Trip Report and Sightings Notes

Compiled by Kip Miller and Mike Champagne

Sunday, April 17 – Denver Airport to Gunnison. The tour was scheduled to begin at mid-day today, but everyone in the group arrived a day early – so naturally many spent the morning exploring around our airport hotel with binoculars in hand. Here we got the trip off to a start with the first of many Western Meadowlarks, Horned Larks, a few Say's Phoebes and a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes.

Around noon we all linked up with Forrest, loaded the vans (surprisingly quick!) and departed for Gunnison. En route it quickly became apparent what a great scenery trip it was going to be, as we enjoyed views of mountains and more on the drive down Highway 285. The birding highlight of the drive was a stop in Buena Vista where some time walking around town yielded great views of two or more Lewis's Woodpeckers. Other birds seen during our neighborhood bird walk included Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, Northern Flicker, Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Siskin and Pink-sided Junco. We wrapped up the day with a great dinner at Garlic Mike's in Gunnison, joined by our guide for the next morning, Rebecca.



A Lewis's Woodpecker in a cottonwood in Buena Vista.

Monday, April 18 – Gunnison Sage Grouse Day & Crested Butte Birding. The day started dark and early (this would become a reoccurring theme!) with our first predawn lek visit of the tour. After departing the hotel at 4:30 a.m. we arrived at the lek site about 5:00 a.m. We entered the blind (a trailer of sorts...) and 20 minutes later windows were opened providing views of a still dark landscape. As it became light the dark forms of a dozen or so Gunnison Sage Grouse could be seen in the distance, but aargh – just as it was getting light enough for all to actually see them, most of the grouse flew off the lek and out of sight in the sage brush! Eventually one remaining male was located (whew!)

and we enjoyed respectable scope views of it until it flew off (providing a great in-flight view) at about 7:00 a.m. Also seen from the blind was a Golden Eagle, which may explain the sudden and early departure of the rest of the grouse gang!

After returning to the hotel for breakfast and a reduction in clothing, we headed for the mountain ski town of Crested Butte. We initially drove past the location we were searching for, but this turned out to be a fortunate error, as we found a small group of Long-billed Curlews and Willets standing in the snow! (That's right, big shorebirds in the snow....) After soaking up this unusual scene we located a feeder attracting Cassin's Finches, Brown-capped Rosy-finches and a few Gray-crowned Rosy-finches. Just as we



Gunnison Sage Grouse viewing from the "trailer blind."

were loading up to leave a larger flock of rosy-finches dropped in and we found at least a couple of Black Rosy-finches in the bunch. Great views for all and lifers for many! En route back to Gunnison for lunch we stopped in Alton where with a bit more patience we found American Dippers in the East River. After lunch, it was a travel afternoon with a straight-through drive to Georgetown.



Birding (and enjoying the sun) in Coal Creek Canyon.

Tuesday, April 19 – Loveland Pass (not...) and on to Grand Junction. Sometimes the best of plans don't work so well.... After being staged in the right location for an early morning “assault” on Loveland Pass to search for the elusive White-tailed Ptarmigan, we were forced to abandon due to snow and road conditions. So.... we continued west on I-70 where we experienced mildly challenging driving conditions due to the snow and later after dropping in elevation, heavy rain! Eventually we moved out of the rain and enjoyed a fun (and sunny) afternoon of birding in rocky Coal Creek Canyon. We had no luck with the elusive Chukar, but had great views of a handsome Black-throated Sparrow and many Rock Wrens. A pair of Golden Eagles and a distant flock of Pinyon Jays were additional highlights.

Wednesday, April 20 – Colorado National Monument and on to Craig. We began our “non-grouse” day with a drive through the scenic red rock canyons of Colorado National Monument. At a roadside pull-off we were successful in attracting a pair of Juniper Titmice and enjoyed views of both Mountain and Western Bluebirds. Continuing to another roadside area we found a small group of Pinyon Jays. The lighting was not as good as yesterday, but they were much closer and the distinctive shape was easy for all to see. After backtracking through the Monument and an always appreciated rest stop, we explored a nearby residential area where highlights included Gambel's Quail and Western Kingbird.

Later we continued north to Craig. After checking into the hotel we did some scouting of locations where we hoped to find Dusky and Sharp-tailed Grouse the next day. No grouse were seen, but we found a couple of flocks of feeding White-faced Ibis, an adult Bald Eagle feeding on a deer carcass and perhaps most surprising – a Porcupine that seemed to be “grazing” in the middle of a field!



A rather curious Juniper Titmouse....

Thursday, April 21 – Sharp-tailed Grouse Day and on to Walden. We left the hotel for the Sharp-tailed lek at 4:30 a.m. in the rain and wondered what effect it would have on the grouse and their display behavior. However, as we approached the lek site the rain changed to snow (!) - but by the time we arrived, the falling precipitation ceased. As it became light it was obvious there was a bit of snow cover on the ground, but fortunately this did not seem to bother the grouse. They began to appear and teased us by coming up and over the ridge and by disappearing over the back side where they could not be seen. However with patience we were all treated to scope views as they displayed and performed their comical (to us, not to them....) dance maneuvers. Satisfied with our views, we left for the area where we hoped to find a Dusky Grouse. No luck with this species, but we did find more Sharp-tails displaying and we enjoyed the scenery and views of other birds, including a singing Spotted Towhee.

In the afternoon we continued on to Walden where we spent some time exploring after checking in to our motel. Afternoon highlights included several Swainson's Hawks, a single Rough-legged Hawk and an impressive diversity of waterbirds on Walden Reservoir. Shortly after we wrapped up our birding it started to snow. It was coming down rather heavy as we concluded dinner and returned to the motel and it left us wondering what the impact might be on our attempt to view Greater Sage-Grouse on the following morning.... Hmm, stay tuned.....



A well camouflaged Sharp-tailed Grouse...

Friday, April 22 – Greater Sage-Grouse Day and on to Fort Collins.

When we gathered at 4:30 a.m. we were relieved to see the snow had stopped and the moon was out – favorable conditions to access the lek site *and* conditions that should not impact the grouse behavior. Shortly after we arrived at the lek site and dealt with a minor van issue (Oops, briefly stuck, but pushed out with a great team effort!), we noticed dark shapes against the snow to our left. Greater Sage-Grouse! Eventually a total of 60 or more gathered and put on a great show. As one participant noted, it felt like we were in the middle of National Geographic wildlife special!



Some not-so-well camouflaged Greater Sage-Grouse!

After breakfast in the motel, we returned to the Walden Reservoir to enjoy the many waterfowl present. In addition to the species we found yesterday, we located a large raft of Western Grebes, which also included at least a few Clark's Grebes. We later continued to the east and over Cameron Pass to Fort Collins for the night. A highlight of the drive was a stop at the Colorado State Park visitor center for great views of Mountain Chickadees, Cassin's Finches, Brown-capped Rosy-Finches and a few bright Pine Grosbeaks at the feeders.

Saturday, April 23 – Pawnee Grasslands and on to Wray.

This morning we explored the wide open spaces of the Pawnee National Grasslands – a very different setting from the mountainous regions of recent days. The most conspicuous birds were Western Meadowlarks, Horned Larks and Vesper Sparrows, but we also noted good numbers of migrant Sage Thrashers, Swainson's Hawks and resident and/or migrant Loggerhead Shrikes. Additional highlights included 2-3 Mountain Plovers (unfortunately, not an easy find in the Pawnee Grasslands anymore...), 2-3 Burrowing Owls, a Ferruginous Hawk and several McCown's Longspurs.

After completing the drive southeast to Wray, we met with Rancher Bob Bledsoe who owns the ranch where we hope to watch the Greater Prairie Chickens at their lek site. After Bob filled us in on the workings of the ranch and a bit of history on the Prairie Chickens, we made a quick drive to the lek site, where at least 20 birds were present. On the way back, some added another "chicken" to the trip list, when a pair of Bobwhite Quail walked across the road!



Cold, but happy, birders at Walden Reservoir.

Sunday, April 24 – Greater Prairie-Chicken Day and south to Lamar. Rancher Bob told us the region only receives about 16 inches of precipitation per year, but we awoke early to rain. Hmm..... Undaunted we departed at 4:45 a.m. for lek site. It was still raining slightly when we arrived and as it became light there were no prairie-chickens to be seen, though a few Burrowing Owls were visible. After a short, but nervous wait (would they show up in the rain?), several prairie-chickens flew in and immediately began vocalizing and displaying. Though the performance was less active than usual according to Forrest, we still had good views of approximately 30 males and enjoyed the show.



The wide open spaces of the Pawnee Grasslands.

After returning to Wray for breakfast at “Cafe Davis” and to pack up, we headed south for Lamar. En route we drove through a wooded area where a number of eastern species, including Eastern Bluebird, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Blue Jay were seen. We also made stops for waterbirds at Bonney Reservoir and at Queen’s State Wildlife Area near Lamar. At Bonney we scoped a flock from the dam that included American Avocets and Marbled Godwits. A particular highlight here was a flock of breeding plumaged Franklin’s Gulls that flew in and landed. Many showed an obvious pinkish cast to the breast that most had never seen before. At the Queens State Wildlife Area we found a nice mix of additional waterbirds – highlights of which were a few Snowy Plovers and Baird’s Sandpipers.

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We weren’t the only ones in the grasslands....

Monday, April 25 – Lesser Prairie-Chicken Day and return to Denver. Our final day featured our earliest start. We departed the hotel in Lamar at 3:45 a.m. to link up with Fred Dorenkamp in Holly. From here we were to ride in a school bus to the lek site, but Fred was worried about the potential of getting stuck if rains had been heavy, so we followed most of the way in the vans. After reaching the lek site, we transferred to the bus and rolled out into the field. At dawn it was obvious a fog had settled on the area. We were able to see the Lesser Prairie-Chickens, but it took patience due to the distance and fog. Later we enjoyed a “rancher’s breakfast” back at the Dorenkamps, which Fred’s wife Norma had waiting for us when we arrived.

After returning to Lamar to pack up, we hit the road for the drive back to Denver to wrap up the tour. En route we made a stop at the Holbrooke Reservoir where we found Western and a few Clark’s Grebes (with heads up!) and another Baird’s Sandpiper. Our final stop of the trip was an all too brief visit to Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs where we enjoyed views of the rock formations and two of the resident Prairie Falcons. A nice way to end a great birding adventure!



A Greater Prairie-Chicken “discussion group”...

Colorado Grouse Tour – Sightings Notes

Swans, Geese, & Ducks

Canada Goose – Observed each day of the trip, usually in ponds along the road.

Wood Duck – Seen in the eastern edge of Colorado, the first time at the Hale Ponds.

Gadwall - Seen in many ponds and lakes during the trip.

American Wigeon – First seen along one of the back roads north of Hayden.

Mallard – Seen each day of the trip.

Blue-winged Teal – Seen just once, at the Hale Ponds.

Cinnamon Teal – Found in several locations, including a pond near Hayden and Walden Reservoir.

Northern Shoveler – Seen along the road and at Walden Reservoir.

Northern Pintail – Seen at several locations along the road.

Green-winged Teal – Observed on a wetland north of Hayden.

Canvasback – Observed with numerous other species at Walden Reservoir.

Redhead – Also seen at Walden Reservoir.

Ring-necked Duck – Spotted along the road to Crested Butte.

Lesser Scaup – Seen at several locations, including Walden Reservoir.

Greater Scaup – There were a few of these at Walden Reservoir.

Bufflehead – First seen in a pond near Hayden.

Common Merganser – First seen in the river near Cameo, also at Walden Reservoir.

Ruddy Duck – First observed along I-70 on the way to Grand Junction.

Grouse, Prairie Chickens, & Turkey

Ring-necked Pheasant – Seen en route to Wray and at other eastern locations.

Greater Sage-Grouse – With about 62 birds and clear, close viewing, this site south of Walden provided what was probably the group's best lek experience (we got the van out of the ditch just in time!).

Gunnison Sage Grouse – Something, possibly a Golden Eagle, flushed most of these rare birds off of the lek before we got great looks from the blind. Fortunately, one bird stuck around so that everyone could add it to their life list.

Sharp-tailed Grouse – We observed two groups of these birds displaying. The first was along County Road 27, southeast of Hayden. The other was north of Hayden, a group we discovered while searching for Dusky Grouse.

Greater Prairie Chicken – We first observed this species in the evening at their lek, after an introduction by rancher/landowner Bob Bledsoe. The next morning we observed about 27 birds displaying.

Lesser Prairie Chicken – We visited a lek of this very rare species aboard an old school bus, operated by Fred Dorenkamp of Arena Dust Tours. The birds were a challenge to see in the distance, even with spotting scopes. One bird did fly past the bus, providing a somewhat better view. After leaving the lek, we traveled to Fred's ranch where we were treated to an old-fashioned rancher's breakfast put on by Fred's wife, Norma.

Wild Turkey – Several roadside views in the west half of the state and also near Hale in the east.

New World Quail

Gambel's Quail – Seen near homes adjacent to the Colorado National Monument.

Northern Bobwhite – A covey of these birds were seen along the road when returning from the Greater Prairie Chicken lek.



Big shorebirds in the snow. Who would've thought?

Grebes

Pied-billed Grebe – Seen at several locations, the first site was Walden Reservoir.

Eared Grebe – This species was numerous at Walden Reservoir and was also observed at Holbrook Reservoir.

Western Grebe – This species was also numerous at Walden and Holbrook Reservoirs.

Clark's Grebe – We had excellent scope views of this grebe at Walden Reservoir, Which provided an opportunity for everyone to study the important field marks which distinguish it from the Western Grebe.



Enjoying a "rancher's breakfast" at the Dorenkamps.

Pelicans

American White Pelican – This species was seen on most days of the trip. It was first observed flying over a field along U.S.-285 and was also seen on Walden Reservoir.

Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant – Seen on many days.

Bitterns, Herons, & Egrets

Great Blue Heron – This species was first seen near the motel in Gunnison and was seen subsequently on each day of the trip.

Ibises

White-faced Ibis – A few large flocks were seen in farm fields east of Hayden.

New World Vultures

Turkey Vulture – Seen daily of the trip.

Kites, Eagles, & Hawks

Osprey – These were seen along I-70 on the way to Grand Junction.

Bald Eagle – These were also seen in wetlands along I-70 as above.

Northern Harrier – First seen flying along the shore of the Walden Reservoir.

Sharp-shinned Hawk – This was seen by George Vogel while the group was searching for Dusky Grouse, north of the town of Hayden.

Cooper's Hawk – This hawk was seen chasing songbirds along U.S. 385, south of Wray.

Swainson's Hawk – This species was seen on each day of the tour, plus on the pre-tour/travel day. Several dark morphs were observed, including one which we stopped to scope south of Crested Butte. An astonishing number of these birds were observed on the ground, in fields along Highway 14, east of the Pawnee National Grassland.

Red-tailed Hawk – This species was seen each day of the trip.

Ferruginous Hawk – We got an excellent look at one of these birds flying overhead in the Pawnee National Grassland.

Rough-legged Hawk – A single bird was seen on consecutive days near the road leading to the Greater Sage-Grouse lek. We were able to study the bird perched and in flight.

Golden Eagle – This eagle was perched near the Gunnison Sage-Grouse lek and possibly had something to do with displaying birds moving off into the sage. We also were treated to a bird making a power dive off a cliff in Coal Creek Canyon, near Cameo.

Falcons

American Kestrel – This small falcon was seen on each day of the tour, plus on the pre-tour/travel day.

Prairie Falcon – We enjoyed excellent views of this falcon on our last stop of the tour, the Garden of the Gods. Some also saw this species near the Microtel Inn during the pre-tour/travel day.

Rails, Moorhens, & Coots

American Coot – Observed in several wetlands, including in ponds near Hayden.

Cranes

Sandhill Crane – Cranes were seen along the highway, north of Buena Vista. We also observed them in fields in the Hayden area.

Plovers

Snowy Plover – A nice find along the lakeshore at Queens State Wildlife Area.

Killdeer – Seen at many locations, including around the Microtel Inn on Day 1.

Mountain Plover – Several birds were seen in the Pawnee National Grassland, in areas where there had been a spring burn.

Stilts & Avocets

Black-necked Stilt – We had a long-distance view of this bird at the Holbrook Reservoir.

American Avocet – We were able to view a large group of these at the Bonny Reservoir.

Sandpipers & Allies

Greater Yellowlegs – A single bird was seen at Queens State Wildlife Area.

Willet – Seen at several locations, the most surprising was several birds sitting on a snow pile in Crested Butte.

Long-billed Curlew – Individual were seen on the same snow pile as above in Crested Butte. A flock was also seen at Bonny Reservoir.

Marbled Godwit – This species was seen at Bonny and Holbrook Reservoirs.

Semipalmated Sandpiper – These were seen at Queens State Wildlife Area.

Least Sandpiper – A few birds were found in a creek near the road by Hale.

Baird's Sandpiper – Kip picked these out at Queens State Wildlife Area and the species was subsequently seen at Holbrook Reservoir. It was a lifer for several participants.

Wilson's Snipe – A bird was observed at Queens State Wildlife Area.

Wilson's Phalarope – These shorebirds were seen on a pond near the Sharp-tailed Grouse lek, Queens State Wildlife Area, and Bonny Reservoir.

Gulls & Terns

Franklin's Gull – This black-headed gull was seen at the Bonny and Holbrook Reservoirs. Participants and leaders alike enjoyed seeing the pink blush on the birds in the flock at Bonny Reservoir.

Ring-billed Gull – Birds were seen at both Bonny and Holbrook Reservoirs.

California Gull – We had great looks at this species at Walden Reservoir.

Herring Gull – A single bird was seen at Bonny Reservoir.

Forster's Tern – A few of these terns were seen at Bonny Reservoir.

Pigeons & Doves

Rock Pigeon – Seen daily on the tour.

Band-tailed Pigeon – We got a *really* good look at a single bird at Crested Butte.

Eurasian Collared-Dove – This introduced species was seen on most days.

Mourning Dove – This was also seen on most days.

Owls

Great Horned Owl – These were seen several times on the east side of the state. Sightings were near the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek, the town of Wray, the South Republican State Wildlife Area, and the town of Holly.

Burrowing Owl – We enjoyed scope views of these birds in a prairie dog town in the Pawnee National Grasslands and found a few more at the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek.



There's a ptarmigan up there, somewhere....



We saw and heard many Western Meadowlarks!

with other “eastern” birds in the South Republican Wildlife Area near the state’s eastern border.

Downy Woodpecker – This was also seen in the above area near the border.

Northern “Red-shafted” Flicker – This form of the flicker was seen each day until our group traveled to the east side of Colorado. It was first seen at Buena Vista.

Northern “Yellow-shafted” Flicker – This form of the Northern Flicker was observed in the South Republican State Wildlife Area.

Tyrant Flycatchers

Say’s Phoebe – This phoebe was seen at the Microtel Inn upon our arrival and found on most days throughout the tour.

Western Kingbird – First seen in the residential area near the Colorado National Monument.

Shrikes

Loggerhead Shrike – This species was first seen near the Microtel Inn at the start of the trip and later seen in the Pawnee National Grassland and other sites.

Jays, Crows, & Ravens

Gray Jay – Forrest and Terri spotted this bird at the Garden of the Gods.

Steller’s Jay – First seen along I-70 and later seen at the Moose Visitor Center of the Colorado State Parks along Highway 14.

Blue Jay – This birds was seen in the eastern half of the state on two separate days.

Pinyon Jay – A large flock of these birds was seen in Coal Creek Canyon near Cameo. They were also seen near the Colorado National Monument.

Black-billed Magpie – The group had many roadside sightings of this species.

American Crow – This common species was seen most days.

Common Raven – This species was also seen on most days.

Larks

Horned Lark – These birds were seen near the Microtel Inn, near Denver, and on most subsequent days, either in the grasslands or agricultural lands.

Swallows

Tree Swallow – This species was seen near Cameo.

Violet-green Swallow – This swallow was seen from the Taylor Bridge, near Almont.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – This swallow was seen near Holbrook Reservoir.

Barn Swallow – This bird was spotted at the Queens State Wildlife Area.

Chickadees & Titmice

Black-capped Chickadee – This familiar bird was first seen in the Buena Vista area.

Mountain Chickadee – This chickadee was also first seen in Buena Vista.

Juniper Titmouse – This “plain” titmouse was seen in the Colorado National Monument.

Nuthatches

White-breasted Nuthatch – This bird was first seen near Buena Vista.

Swifts

White-throated Swift – Seen overhead at several areas with high cliffs, including Colorado National Monument, Coal Creek Canyon, and Garden of the Gods.

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher – This species was seen in several locations, including the South Republican State Wildlife Area, near Hale.

Woodpeckers

Lewis’s Woodpecker – After walking the neighborhoods around Buena Vista, we finally spotted a small group of these spectacular woodpeckers and enjoyed excellent views.

Red-bellied Woodpecker – This species was seen

Wrens

Rock Wren – The only wren of the trip, this bird was first seen in Coal Creek Canyon. We had excellent views of this species in the Pawnee National Grassland.

Dippers

American Dipper – We got excellent views of a couple of these birds along the Taylor River near Almont.

Kinglets

Ruby-crowned Kinglet – This kinglet was seen in the neighborhood in Buena Vista.

Thrushes

Eastern Bluebird – This species was seen in the South Republican State Wildlife Area near Hale.

Western Bluebird – This bird was seen in several locations, including Crested Butte, Coal Creek Canyon, and Colorado National Monument.

Mountain Bluebird – This bluebird was seen in many locations during the first half of the trip, including an excellent view at the rest area north of Buena Vista.

Townsend's Solitaire – This thrush was seen only at Buena Vista during the trip.

American Robin – Michigan's state bird was seen each day of the trip.

Catbirds, Mockingbirds, & Thrashers

Northern Mockingbird – This mimic thrush was seen by some at Fred's Ranch.

Sage Thrasher – The group had excellent views of this thrasher in the Pawnee National Grassland.

Starlings

European Starling – This introduced species was seen on most days of the trip and on the pretour/travel day.

Wood-Warblers

Yellow-rumped "Audubon" Warbler – Several group members had good looks at this "western" form at the Crow Valley Campground in the Pawnee National Grassland.

New World Sparrows & Allies

Spotted Towhee – Our group had excellent views of this species at the Sharp-tailed Grouse lek.

Chipping Sparrow – This was seen at several locations, including the rest area north of Buena Vista, and the Colorado National Monument.

Brewer's Sparrow – This western sparrow was seen in Coal Creek Canyon and in the Pawnee National Grassland.

Vesper Sparrow – First seen at the Colorado National Monument, this species was abundant in the Pawnee National Grassland and along many roadsides.

Lark Sparrow – This beautiful sparrow was first seen near Cameo.

Black-throated Sparrow – Another handsome sparrow, this was seen near Cameo, in Coal Creek Canyon.

Savannah Sparrow - This species was seen only in the Colorado National Monument.

Fox Sparrow – This sparrow was seen along the Taylor River, near Almont.

Song Sparrow – This species was seen at the above location, and at Walden Reservoir.

Lincoln's Sparrow – This sparrow was also seen along the Taylor River.

White-crowned Sparrow – This sparrow was first seen around homes in the vicinity of the Colorado National Monument.



Party (or checklist) time in Mike and Kip's room!



Mike "Deadeye" Champagne zeroes in on an unsuspecting Rosy-Finch in Crested Butte.

Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Junco – This junco subspecies was first seen in Buena Vista and later in the Crested Butte area.

Dark-eyed "Slate-colored" Junco – The junco subspecies most of us see in the winter was seen at the Colorado State Park's Moose Visitor Center.

Dark-eyed "Gray-headed" Junco – This junco subspecies was seen several times, the first time at our lunch stop in the mountains on the first day of the official tour.

McCown's Longspur – This attractive prairie bird was seen in the Pawnee National Grasslands.

Blackbirds, Meadowlarks, & Orioles

Red-winged Blackbird – This bird was seen each day of the trip.

Western Meadowlark – From the minute we arrived at the Microtel Inn on our travel day, until it was time to head home, this bird could be seen and heard. No complaints were heard from members of the group!

Yellow-headed Blackbird – We had excellent Views of this bird on Walden Reservoir and also along Highway 14.

Brewer's Blackbird – This bird was first seen at the Moose Visitor Center and later around some of the ranches in the east part of the state.

Common Grackle – This species was seen on most days of the trip.

Great-tailed Grackle – This grackle was seen during the final three days of the trip as we traveled around the eastern portion of Colorado.

Brown-headed Cowbird – This blackbird was seen around the hotel at the trip's start.

Finches

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch – We were treated to rosy-finches twice during the tour, once on Crested Butte and again at the Moose Visitor Center. This species was seen on both occasions.

Black Rosy-Finch – This species was seen only at Crested Butte and only with some persistence. Kip's van finally found the mother-lode of rosy-finches and we were able to get good looks at a couple of these.

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch – This was the most common of the rosy-finches at the above locations.

Pine Grosbeak – This large finch was seen only at the Moose Visitor Center.

Cassin's Finch – We had excellent views of this species at the feeders where we found the rosy-finches.

House Finch – This finch was seen several times around towns.

Pine Siskin – This small finch was seen during the first two days at high elevations.

American Goldfinch – This finch was seen only in the east at the South Republican State Wildlife Area.

Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow – This bird was seen each day of the trip and on the travel day.

Other Sightings

Mammals: Mule Deer, Elk, Pronghorn Antelope, Nuttall's Cottontail, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Bison, Coyote, Red Fox, Bighorn Sheep, Rock Squirrel, Porcupine, Muskrat, Round-tailed Ground Squirrel, Least Chipmunk, Fox Squirrel, Badger, White-sided Jack Rabbit, Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel. **Amphibians:** Western Chorus Frog

Locations Visited

- Day 1:** Areas around Microtel Inn in Aurora, Highway U.S 285 going south and west of Denver with a stop in the mountains for lunch, Buena Vista, Highway U.S. 50 to Gunnison.
- Day 2:** Route 887 to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse blind, Crested Butte, Taylor Bridge and River near Almont, travel from Gunnison to Georgetown.
- Day 3:** Georgetown to Grand Junction on Highway I-70 with a rest area stop at high elevation and a stop at Coal Creek Canyon near Cameo, birding around the Comfort Inn, in Grand Junction.
- Day 4:** Colorado National Monument and nearby neighborhoods, Coal Creek Canyon near Cameo, travel to Craig on State Road 13, birding around Hayden.
- Day 5:** Sharp-tailed Grouse lek on County Road 27 southeast of Hayden, Dusky Grouse area north of Hayden, travel via U.S. 40 and State Road 14 (over Rabbit Ear's Pass) to Walden, Greater Sage-Grouse lek, Walden Reservoir.
- Day 6:** Greater Sage-Grouse lek south of Walden, Walden Reservoir, State Road 14 over Cameron Pass, Colorado State Park's Moose Visitor Center, Highway U.S. 287 to Fort Collins.
- Day 7:** Pawnee National Grassland, State Road 14, State Road 61, and U.S. 34 to Wray, evening at Bob Bledsoe's Ranch with visit to the Greater Prairie Chicken lek.
- Day 8:** Greater Prairie Chicken lek, South Republican (River) State Wildlife Area, Hale Ponds, Bonny Reservoir, Queens State Wildlife Area.
- Day 9:** Lesser Prairie Chicken lek, breakfast at home of Fred and Norma Dorenkamp, Holbrook Reservoir, Garden of the Gods.



Colorado Grouse Tour - Daily Sightings List

	Family/Species Name	P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Swans, Geese, & Ducks		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1	Canada Goose									X	X
2	Wood Duck										
3	Gadwall		X			X	X	X		X	
4	American Wigeon						X	X		X	
5	Mallard		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	Blue-winged Teal									X	
7	Cinnamon Teal					X	X	X			
8	Northern Shoveler				X		X	X		X	X
9	Northern Pintail						X			X	
10	Green-winged Teal						X	X		X	
11	Canvasback						X	X			
12	Redhead						X	X			
13	Ring-necked Duck			X	X		X	X			
14	Greater Scaup						X				
15	Lesser Scaup			X		X	X	X			
16	Bufflehead					X	X	X			
17	Common Merganser				X	X	X	X			
18	Ruddy Duck				X	X	X	X		X	X
	Grouse, Prairie-Chickens, & Turkey										
19	Ring-necked Pheasant								X	X	X
20	Greater Sage-Grouse							X			
21	Gunnison Sage-Grouse			X							
22	Sharp-tailed Grouse						X				
23	Greater Prairie-Chicken								X	X	
24	Lesser Prairie-Chicken										X
25	Wild Turkey		X		X	X				X	
	New World Quail										
26	Gambel's Quail					X					
27	Northern Bobwhite								X		
	Grebes										
28	Pied-billed Grebe						X	X		X	
29	Eared Grebe						X	X		X	X
30	Western Grebe							X		X	X
31	Clark's Grebe							X			X
	Pelicans										
32	American White Pelican		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Cormorants										
33	Double-crested Cormorant		X			X	X	X		X	X
	Bitterns, Herons, & Egrets										
34	Great Blue Heron		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Ibises										
35	White-faced Ibis					X	X	X		X	X
	New World Vultures		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
36	Turkey Vulture										
	Kites, Eagles, & Hawks										
37	Osprey				X	X					
38	Bald Eagle				X	X					
39	Northern Harrier						X		X	X	
40	Sharp-shinned Hawk						X			X	

