

# Colorado and Wyoming

15–30 June 2001

**Participants:**

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**Peter and Fran Barlow**

**Tony and Viv Codner**

**Roger Dodds**

**Colin Dredge and Gill Church**

**Dave Helliard**

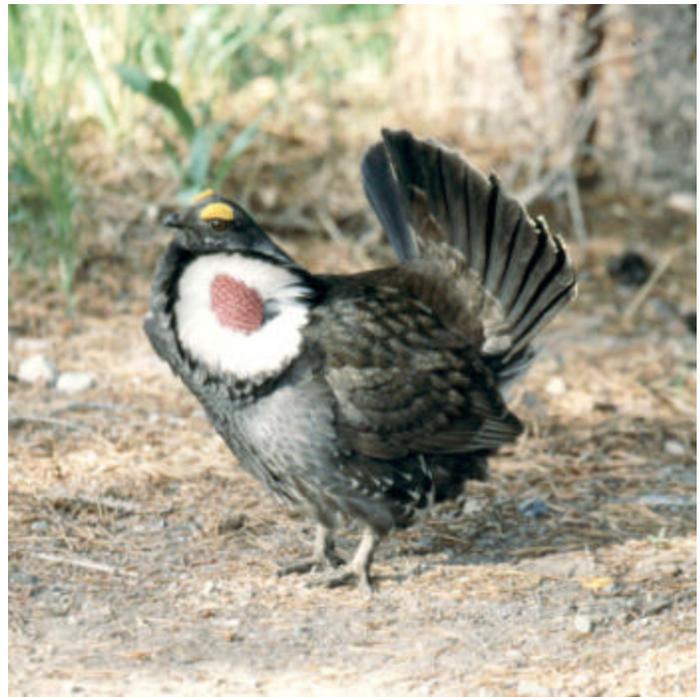
**Ivan Martin**

**John May**

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**David and Kay Ryves**

**Stuart and Gillian Stanniland**



**Picture: Blue Grouse**

**Leaders:**

**Vaughan Ashby and Stuart Healy**

**Day 1:** After a smooth and punctual transatlantic flight to Chicago, the onward flight to Denver was delayed due to bad weather holding up our connecting plane. Eventually arriving in Denver two hours late, we were entertained by our first birds of the trip, House Finches, which have found a home in the arrivals hall. They have everything they need, food from the restaurants, water from the display fountains, and places to nest in the structure of the building, they never need to leave! After picking up our minibuses, we finally left the airport at 19.40. On the drive north we managed just a few common birds including Snowy Egret, Canada Goose, Red-tailed Hawk, Eurasian Collared-dove, Common Grackle and Red-winged Blackbird. We arrived in Fort Collins at 21.00 to encounter another problem; the motel had lost the reservation! They only had four rooms available so we found another six another nearby motel. Oh well, we were there and tomorrow is another day!

**Day 2:** We spent the day in Rocky Mountain National Park experiencing some wonderful scenery. It was a beautiful day, pleasantly cool on Trail Ridge Road, but we did have some snow at high elevation in the late afternoon. We spent much of our time looking for White-tailed Ptarmigan without success. The day began well along Highway 34 with great views of a pair of American Dippers at a nest on the Big Thompson River and we saw at least three as we drove along. A short stop on Bear Lake Road produced Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Wood-pewee, Dusky Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Warbling Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow, Pine Siskin and Western Tanager. A probable Prairie Falcon came into view but disappeared before we could identify it. Driving up Trail Ridge Road, a stop at one of the overlooks produced many Clark's Nutcrackers (only slightly outnumbered by tourists) and a couple of Townsend's Solitaires. After that we worked several areas of tundra (all regular spots for the ptarmigan) but saw only ptarmigan droppings and feathers! People that we talked to, including park staff, also had not been seeing the birds. This environment here is very sparse, not only in terms of vegetation but also in species diversity, and we saw only Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird, American Pipit, Horned Lark, Wilson's Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow. A stop at Lake Irene was pleasant (it was here that we had snow for about 20 minutes) and we saw a good number of Gray Jays.

We didn't find the hoped for Pine Grosbeaks but we did see our first Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco's of the trip Not a large number of species, but that was more than made up for with the magnificent scenery.

**Day 3:** Another beautiful blue-sky day that we spent entirely in Rocky Mountain National Park. We again made a major effort to find White-tailed Ptarmigan, this time a little more focused and covering more ground than yesterday, but we came up with the same result, nada. The day began well again with a couple of Golden Eagles along Highway 34 followed by Common Merganser along the river. Driving up Trail Ridge Road, a Williamson's Sapsucker zipped across the road but was seen only by a few. We then spent three hours combing the tundra seeing lots of Elk and the same few species as yesterday, but still no ptarmigan. Around noon we started birding in Endo Valley, seeing two more Golden Eagles and a Sharp-shinned Hawk soaring over the cliffs here. The campground was teeming with people but a lunch break by the stream followed by walk along the trail produced a number of common species including a beautiful male Blackburnian Warbler and Red-naped Sapsucker at a nest. We spent quite some time birding near the Alluvial Fan area looking unsuccessfully for Three-toed Woodpecker but we did turn up Hairy Woodpecker, a pair of Williamson's Sapsuckers feeding young and lots of Red-naped Sapsuckers. Also here were Western Wood-pewee, Cordilleran Flycatcher, House Wren, Brown Creeper and Yellow-rumped Warbler. We finished the day at lower elevation along Bear Lake Road. In the willows and pines along the river we found Broad-tailed Hummingbird (everywhere, both days in the park), Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker, a couple each of Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers, a gorgeous male Mountain Bluebird, several Townsend's Solitaires, Warbling Vireo, Song and Lincoln's Sparrows.

**Day 4:** Today we focused on grassland birds of the eastern plains, spending much of our time in the Pawnee National Grasslands. The weather could have co-operated a little better, filtered sunshine was a blessing in terms of keeping the heat down, but afternoon winds made birding difficult. We had an excellent start to the day along highway 14 near county road 51 where we had close range looks at a dozen or so Mountain Plovers. At the same location we saw the first of numerous Lark Buntings. Other roadside birds included Northern Harrier, Belted Kingfisher, Lark Sparrow and Western Meadowlark. Next came an enjoyable stop at Crow Valley Park and Campground near the town of Briggsdale. More than 10 Common Nighthawks were active, flying around and "peenting". We also saw several birds roosting on branches. Although we didn't spend too long here, our time was productive, other species included Great Horned Owl, Western Wood-pewee, many Western and a couple of Eastern Kingbirds, Blue Jay, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, several Bullock's and two Orchard Orioles. Now it was back to the business of the day. A pleasant surprise as we headed north on CR77 was a singing Dickcissel. As we started grassland birding along CR96 we immediately found displaying McCown's Longspurs, another bird that was abundant in multiple locations throughout the day. Other species here included Grasshopper and Brewer's Sparrows. Our difficulties with the wind began in the western portion of the grasslands along CR114. Although we found a few Chestnut-collared Longspurs, the birds stayed low and at a distance. Consequently, we were unable to obtain satisfactory views despite many hours of trying. We added more Northern Harriers; several Swainson's Hawks but just one Ferruginous Hawk. We ended the day by driving to our overnight destination of Laramie, Wyoming, seeing a few California Gulls along the way and in town. In the end it was a mostly successful day with all target species seen, but one that was very frustrating.

**Day 5:** A very cold, cloudy and windy start turned into a relatively cool, blue sky and blustery day. Since we were in Laramie, we had a bit of a dilemma in improving on the views of Chestnut-collared Longspurs because this is an area where there are not common (the habitat here is mostly short grass favoured by McCown's). Nevertheless, we decided to try. We headed north on Highway 30 near the town of Bosler where a stop at a roadside pond was very productive. Species here included American White Pelican, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull (these four species were common in many locations throughout the day), Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Willet and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Next we worked along Howell Road which parallels the Laramie River through the Harris Ranch (the owner was kind enough to allow us access to the fields on the property). We spent several hours looking unsuccessfully for Chestnut-collared Longspur in marginal habitat, We saw plenty of McCown's Longspurs and a number of other species including numerous Swainson's and three Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Mountain Plover (with chicks), Bank Swallow, Sage Thrashers, Lark Buntings and several Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows. We also saw most of the waterfowl seen earlier plus Double-crested Cormorant, American Wigeon and Spotted Sandpiper Now it was decision time and half the group decided to make the 140 mile round trip to the Cheyenne area to continue looking for Chestnut-collared Longspurs in better habitat. They were successful and had good scope views of a number of males together with numerous McCown's and Killdeer. The rest of the group did some casual birding with visits to Lake Hattie, Hutton Lake NWR, the Laramie River and a number of roadside ponds and lakes south west of Laramie. We recorded many species already seen (including many McCown's Longspurs which were easy to see at Lake Hattie) and added a number of new trip species including six Clark's Grebes, Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Wilson's Snipe, 20+ Franklin's Gulls, Black and Forster's Terns, Marsh Wren, Yellow Warblers and Savannah Sparrow. Happily, the day ended well with the grassland birding successfully behind us and all participants satisfied with their choices. Our focus so far has been on some key birds in fairly species poor habitats so our overall trip list as been growing quite slowly. However, today we added 31 trip species.

**Day 6:** On a beautiful, mostly blue-sky day, we birded our way from Laramie to Rock Springs en route to Jackson. In the morning, we birded in Medicine Bow National Forest where we walked in deep snow. By late afternoon we encountered warm

temperatures in sagebrush country. As we travelled west from Laramie through the grasslands along route 130, roadside birds included Ferruginous Hawk, McCown's Longspur, Horned Lark and Vesper Sparrow. At a stock pond near the Vee Bar Ranch on route 130 we saw perhaps the rarest bird of the day or indeed tour, a male Greater Scaup along with several Lesser Scaup. What a shock to see this bird so far inland in June! Other birds here included Eared Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Canada Goose, Cinnamon Teal, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Wilson's Phalarope, American Avocet, Canvasback, Redhead, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, California Gull, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Black-billed Magpie, American Goldfinch and Western Meadowlark. Among the trees near the ranger station shortly after entering Medicine Bow National Forest, we found several Cordilleran Flycatchers, Clark's Nutcrackers, male and female Western Tanagers, Pine Siskin and three Red Crossbills. A good start to our quest for high elevation birds. At a lakeside stop along the highway near the summit, we immediately saw our two main target birds; Cassin's Finch and three male Pine Grosbeaks. Also here were Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Gray Jay, Common Raven, Mountain Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco and White-crowned Sparrow. At Lewis Lake we scanned in vain for rosy-finches but it didn't seem to matter because birds were almost superfluous in this beautiful spot, an ice cold lake with snow clad Medicine Bow Peak and the Snowy range as a backdrop. We saw some of the species already seen in the mountains plus Golden Eagle, Spotted Sandpiper, a pair of Mountain Bluebirds, numerous Wilson's Warblers and a pair each of Fox (Slate-colored) and Lincoln's Sparrows. From the summit downwards we encountered Sandhill Crane, Townsend's Solitaire, more Gray Jays and Cassin's Finches, Black-billed Magpie and Warbling Vireo. A brief stop in sagebrush yielded a couple of Sage Thrashers. An excellent day with some beautiful scenery and good birds.

**Day 7:** Another great weather day, quite cool shortly after sunrise around Eden Reservoir near Farson; and very warm when we arrived in Jackson Hole in the late afternoon. Our first quarry of the day was Greater Sage-grouse. After carefully searching the extensive sagebrush habitat around Eden Reservoir for over an hour, we drew a blank. It looked for a while that we were going to be unsuccessful but after a tip-off from a friendly local rancher, we eventually came across a group of six birds in the open on a dirt track. They stayed put long enough for us to get a 'scope on them. All were females. (Later in the day we saw a male on Highway 352 near New Fork Lake.) Among the other birds in the area (including Big Sandy Reservoir, Eden Reservoir and Sandy Creek) were Clark's and Western Grebes, American White Pelican, Black-crowned Night-heron, Blue-winged Teal, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, California and Franklin's Gulls, Forster's Tern, a few Sandhill Cranes, lots of Common Nighthawks (a couple of which allowed very close approach), Black-billed Magpie, at least eight Sage Thrashers, Brewer's, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows and Yellow-headed Blackbird. We continued north on Highway 191 and saw at least six Osprey nests (some with birds) near Boulder. After lunch in Pinedale ("Rumors" breakfast and lunch cafe/deli recommended), we birded at New Fork Lake in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. This was a very picturesque spot that we had almost to ourselves. The birding here was pretty good too. This was our first opportunity to look for Blue and Ruffed Grouse. The highlight was a couple of Ruffed Grouse chicks that mum had obviously told to stay put. They were so close that we could have picked them up but we never found an adult. Also of note were our first seven Common Goldeneyes of the trip but a possible Three-toed Woodpecker eluded us. Other birds included lots of Clark's and Western Grebes, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-naped Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, a continually singing Dusky Flycatcher perched in the open, Tree Swallow, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Black-capped Chickadee, a couple of elusive MacGillivray's Warblers, Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows, Black-headed Grosbeak and Western Tanager

**Day 8:** Another beautiful day with some afternoon cloud build-up and a snow flurry on Rendezvous Mountain by late afternoon. We began at Flat Creek overlook just north of Jackson but the morning light was against us, making it difficult to view. Among the birds that we recorded here were Cinnamon Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Belted Kingfisher, Sandhill Crane, Marsh Wren and lots of Yellow-headed Blackbirds but no sign of Trumpeter swans or Barrow's Goldeneyes. We continued north to Sawmill Ponds but the water level here seemed much lower than normal and again we didn't see Barrow's Goldeneye. Nevertheless, birding here was very good Olive-sided and Dusky Flycatchers were both singing but the former was surprisingly difficult to track down. We fared better with an elusive singing MacGillivray's Warbler and managed a good 'scope views from the overlook where we also looked down on a couple of Red Crossbills and Cedar Waxwings. We saw about 30 species in a little over an hour including Wilson's Snipe, Red-naped Sapsucker, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Mountain Bluebird, Black-capped Chickadee, Clark's Nutcracker, Orange-crowned, Yellow and Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, American Goldfinch and Pine Siskin. Driving south on Moose-Wilson Road Stuart heard a Willow Flycatcher and a brief stop quickly produced a good view. As we waited in line for the Rendezvous Mountain tram, a male Calliope Hummingbird visited a feeder. On top of Rendezvous Mountain, our initial strategy for Black Rosy-finch was to scan the distant snow-banks from a vantagepoint about half a mile from the tram terminal. At this elevation, walking long distances is not easy but in the end some decided to walk over to Cody Bowl. After some unsuccessful walking around on the talus and snow, Stuart heard a Black Rosy-finch quite close by. Looking around he was shocked to find that the bird was literally at his feet in the grass. It moved away 10 feet but quickly flew over a ridge and up the mountain. Unfortunately, only Vaughan and two participants had made the trip but they were elsewhere and didn't see it. Stuart tracked the bird to an area where it was probably nesting however, and it perched on top of a small tree (of which there are few in this environment). News of our success reached the other participants by radio and some of them made the trip. We lost the bird again but it returned not long afterwards and their reward was some wonderful views of the bird as it looked at us and called on top of a stunted tree. It was a

slog back to the tram terminal as the wind picked up and a little snow fell, but seeing the bird was certainly worth the effort. It was close to freezing as we left the finches at Summit Lake and this in July. These birds are here by choice and live year round in the bleakest and coldest of habitat. You have to be in awe of such birds and this makes the thrill of seeing them after working so hard, even greater. A magical bird in a wonderful place. Other species seen in this rather bleak environment for birds (talus, snowfields and stunted trees) were Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks, Clark's Nutcracker, Common Raven, Violet-green Swallow, Rock Wren, American Pipit, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, White-crowned Sparrow and Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco. Back in Teton Village we took a well-earned break from our endeavours with some feeder watching and saw male and female Calliope and male Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. Now it was time to pick up the two species we missed this morning. Heading back into Jackson we added Osprey on the Snake River and then found a couple of Trumpeter Swans on Skyline ponds. Next, we rechecked Flat Creek and very soon spotted a goldeneye that turned out to be a female Barrow's Goldeneye (we later found another). A good end to a physically tough day with all three target birds seen as well as a number of good trip birds.

**Day 9:** Today our main target species were all forest birds; Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers and Ruffed and Blue Grouse. We enjoyed good weather throughout the day ended up seeing three out of four, all at nests. We spent the morning on Jenny Lake where we worked south from String Lake along the west shore, took the ferry to the east shore, then returned north along the east shore. Total walking distance was about 4.5 miles. Our first success came with excellent views of a female Three-toed Woodpecker and we ended up seeing a total of four including a male and female feeding young in the nest. Close to the ferry dock we were called back when a female Ruffed Grouse was discovered walking on the trail. As it turned out, the bird had a nest with eggs about 30 feet from the trail. She wandered around feeding for a while and then settled down on the nest, apparently unconcerned by our presence. After the ferry ride to the east shore, habitat and birds decreased and there was a marked increase in tourists on the trail as the morning wore on. Consequently, we didn't see much until we reached an old burn area near where the river feeds the lake. Here, one of the group spotted a woodpecker which promptly disappeared behind a trunk. When it reappeared, a solid black back confirmed our first guess and our hopes, it was a Black-backed Woodpecker. A radio call to the rest of the group was the kiss of death and the bird flew across the river and was lost. However, it wasn't long before another bird flew in from a different direction and led our eyes straight to a nest. For the next 30 minutes we enjoyed watching male and female make numerous feeding visits. Over a period of five hours, our loop trip yielded a total of 30 species including a surprising number of singing Hammond's Flycatchers. MacGillivray's Warblers were present in scattered locations and were particularly common near the west shore ferry dock. Among the other species seen were Western Grebe, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Clark's Nutcracker and our first Swainson's Thrushes of the trip (they were singing and quite numerous). After lunch we decided to check Jackson Lake in the hope of finding a male Harlequin Duck staging there before returning to the coast. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful but between the lake and a couple of ponds we did find plenty of birds to keep us interested. Near Jackson dam, several distant waders (that initially we thought might be curlews) required almost a mile walk before we could confirm them as four Marbled Godwits. Also on the lake were a few Clark's and Western Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, many Canada Geese and American White Pelicans, a couple of Common Loons, Cinnamon Teal, Osprey and California Gull. A small pond yielded two Trumpeter Swans, a female Barrow's Goldeneye (we still haven't seen a male), numerous Wilson's Phalaropes, lots of common ducks and a singing Dusky Flycatcher. A female Moose wandered into view, which must have triggered an alert on moose.com because, before long, the place was crawling with grockles. Exit stage left! In the evening, we checked a regular spot for Great Gray Owl. A talk with the owner of the land confirmed that he had a resident pair that hunted here at dawn and dusk. However, despite some diligent searching and giving lots of blood to the mosquitoes, we came up empty. As dusk approached, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows were both singing and a Common Nighthawk flew by "peenting" and gave a single "boom". We also added a couple of new trip birds; Peregrine Falcon and Green-tailed Towhee. No owl but, a good end to a successful and enjoyable day.

**Day 10:** Today was mostly a sightseeing day in Yellowstone National Park. We saw some great scenery, a number of big mammals and all of our target birds. We began on Signal Mountain where we saw what has to be the closest and most accommodating Blue Grouse anywhere. The male displayed and strutted his stuff as the female sat in a tree, apparently not too interested. She eventually joined him and they walked off into the forest together. However, not before we enjoyed a tremendous display from the male with air sacs inflated (making the "ho" noise) and with combs and tail raised (missing a few feathers). The best part, though, was the distance. How about two feet for anybody brave enough to go that close, incredible! We had the bird in view for 30 minutes. A very good start to the morning. Among the other species here were Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Brewer's Sparrow and Green-tailed Towhee. As we entered Yellowstone NP at the south entrance, we were greeted by a couple of Bald Eagles on the Snake River. One posed at the top of tree for some photos. Also here were Osprey, two Spotted Sandpipers and the usual forest birds. At Durk Lake near West Thumb of Yellowstone Lake we broke our duck (pun intended) with male Barrow's Goldeneye, a large flock was present along with some Buffleheads. Now it was time to go into tourist mode with a visit to Old Faithful and the other thermal geysers. After an hour here they were ready to get away from the mass of humanity. We looked at a few other features driving around the park and saw Buffalo, Elk and Moose. Turning our attention to Harlequin Duck and a talk with park staff confirmed the two locations we had in mind. Unfortunately, the river near Tower was a long drive. Along the way we checked a few spots along the river where water was flowing strongly without success. At Tower we also came up empty and this was

perhaps our best chance although we added Western Bluebird to the trip list. The long drive south was punctuated with a few sightseeing stops at falls and overlooks and amazing views of a Black Bear. Birds included Peregrine Falcon, several Ospreys, White-throated Swifts, several American Dippers and Red Crossbill. Our last destination was Le Hardy Rapids which by all accounts is not a good spot anymore. However, 30 seconds after reaching the bottom of the viewing boardwalk we were scoping a beautiful male Harlequin Duck sitting on a rock. "It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings". As we approached Jackson, a thunderstorm in the Grand Tetons provided a dramatic end to a very long (16 hours and almost 300 miles) but very good day.

**Day 11:** After the long day yesterday we started late and this was our most relaxed day so far. We travelled south from Jackson Hole via Highways 189 and 372 making various roadside stops along the Green River plus visits to the Fontenelle Reservoir and dam, and Seedskaadee NWR. Although this was mainly a travel day back to Rock Springs en route to Grand Junction in Colorado, we added several new trip species. Swainson's Hawks and Sandhill Cranes were quite common along the highway between Bondurant and La Barge and our first Long-billed Curlews of the trip were feeding in the lush fields. Among the other highway species were Osprey, American Kestrel, Common Nighthawk and the usual very numerous Cliff Swallows. Fontenelle Reservoir was worth the time we spent there. Amazingly, two Ring-billed Gulls were a trip first as were three Caspian Terns and a Lesser Yellowlegs. Other species present here included Western Grebe, lots of American White Pelican, a few American Avocets and Marbled Godwits, Common Loon and California Gull. Along the road to the campground below the dam were a couple of Golden Eagles. At the campground (a good migrant spot, but we were too late in the month) we saw Osprey, several roosting Common Nighthawks, Eastern Kingbird, Bullock's Oriole and a number of common species. Continuing south on 372, a roadside stop in sage produced a number of expected species of this habitat except our target Sage Sparrow; Horned Lark, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows and Green-tailed Towhee. No matter, at Seedskaadee NWR we easily found a somewhat co-operative Sage Sparrow running around on the ground in typical fashion. The refuge was fairly quiet in mid afternoon and we didn't find much in the way of landbirds. Species seen included Cinnamon Teal, Northern Harrier, Western Kingbird, Marsh Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow Warbler and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Leaving the refuge, our last bird of the day was a Golden Eagle.

**Day 12:** Mostly a travel day from Rock Springs, Wyoming to Grand Junction, Colorado, for a two-night stay. We used Highway 191 through the Flaming Gorge area of Utah, entering Colorado near Dinosaur NP then heading south on Highway 64 over Douglas Pass. Before leaving Wyoming we birded in the Pinyon Juniper and Sagebrush habitat along Little Firehole Road east of Flaming Gorge. Here we spent some time chasing down the common birds enough times for everyone to see them, species of this habitat can be troublesome! None more so than Juniper Titmouse which, we eventually saw well. Also elusive were Gray Flycatcher and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Other species here were Common Nighthawk, Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Mountain Bluebird, Rock Wren and Brewer's, Chipping and Sage Sparrows. Continuing south, our last bird in Wyoming was Golden Eagle and the first bird in Utah a Prairie Falcon. A brief stop at Flaming Gorge Dam produced about 15 species including several Western Grebes, two Ospreys, a few California Gulls, White-throated Swift, House Wren, Yellow Warbler and Black-headed Grosbeak. Once we were back in Colorado, Western Kingbirds and Black-billed Magpies became common. A roadside stop below Douglas Pass was productive for new trip birds with several Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a couple of singing male Lazuli Buntings and plenty of Spotted Towhees.

**Day 13:** Today we birded in two contrasting locations; Colorado National Monument, near Grand Junction, and Box Canyon Falls in Ouray. Our primary targets were Black Swift, Pinyon Jay and Gray Vireo. The weather co-operated yet again: quite warm in the morning at the monument and mostly cloudy and pleasantly cool at the falls in the afternoon. We spent about five hours at the monument enjoying the spectacular scenery and birding at several places along Rim Rock drive. Our first stop was at Devil's Kitchen where it didn't take long to track down a singing Gray Vireo. However, seeing it was another matter and it took quite some time for everyone to get a decent view. Apart from one other individual in an inaccessible location, this was the only singing Gray Vireo that we found. We walked the trail for about a mile and turned up about 20 species including Gambel's Quail, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bushtit, Juniper Titmouse, Lesser Goldfinch and Black-throated Sparrow. Near the end of our walk, a Cooper's Hawk swooped in to rid the world of a Brown-headed Cowbird. Just a short distance further along Rim Rock Drive, in addition to the outstanding view, Cold Shivers Point gave us a close eye-level view of a perched Violet-green Swallow, not something that happens everyday. Lots of White-throated Swifts were present here. Continuing along the drive we finally tracked down our first Western Scrub-jays of the trip. We finished the morning along the access road to Black Hunter Ridge where a flock of Pinyon Jays begrudgingly obliged us, because they certainly weren't easy to see well. We saw many of the same species already seen plus Gray Flycatcher, Mountain Chickadee, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Spotted Towhee but a potential Virginia's Warbler got away from us. After lunch and a two-hour drive, we arrived at Box Canyon Falls in Ouray and within minutes we were looking at a Black Swift on a nest. The swifts arrived on June 18 and currently there are six active nests, five of which we saw. This made quite a pleasant change from trying to pick one out of the sky among the many White-throated Swifts. Around 17.00, enough Black Swifts were in the sky to make the job of finding them on the wing fairly easy. Among the other species noted here were numerous Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Cordilleran Flycatcher on a nest, American Dipper and many singing Western Tanagers.

**Day 14:** We left Grand Junction early and even with a one-hour breakfast stop we arrived at the base of Mt Evans at 10.00. After a stop at the National Forest visitor centre we headed up the mountain (seeing Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Pine Siskin and Clark's Nutcracker) and started birding at Summit Lake at 11.30. An adult Golden Eagle swooped down and landed on the tundra as we arrived for a good start to the proceedings. However, over the course of the next 90 minutes spirits starting to fade as we failed to locate any rosy-finches. At least two Brown-capped Rosy-finches were calling below an inaccessible ridge but, were not seen. Other species were few and far between in this sparse environment and we saw only Common Raven, many singing American Pipits, Mountain Bluebird, a couple of singing Townsend's Solitaires and a few singing White-crowned Sparrows. We headed to the summit to enjoy the views, take a lunch break and to check for finches. Vaughan's van paused to check out Mountain Goats about a mile below the top whilst Stuart's continued on. All of a sudden, an urgent voice came over the radio "rosy-finch!" Stuart was forced to make a U-turn in the most precarious circumstances in amongst the grockles but by the time his van got to the bird it wasn't showing very well although, thankfully, everyone managed a somewhat back-lit 'scope view. Fortunately, it was of no real consequence because two more Brown-capped Rosy-finches were at the summit. They perched on the boulders, on the stonework and fed on a small snow-bank about 40 feet away from us. Excellent views were had by all. After savouring the moment and enjoying the magnificent panoramic view, a very light snow began to fall as we turned our attention to the ptarmigan. We drove slowly down the mountain and at the last switchback before the straight section down to Summit Lake, an urgent voice was heard over the radio from Vaughan's van again, this time "ptarmigan!" Once again Stuart was forced to do a U-turn as he frantically tried to get back in a hurry but, as it turned out, it didn't really matter. A breeding plumaged female White-tailed Ptarmigan was very co-operative on a grassy ridge at the side of the road. Once again, excellent 'scope filling views, photos and videos were enjoyed by all. As we watched the bird, just crouching and nibbling on wildflowers, frozen rain/sleet started to fall a little heavier. Such is life on Mt Evans in June at 14,000+ feet. What a great way to end our trip, two good birds in a wonderful location. The sighting was especially pleasing given the amount of work we put in last week without success in Rocky Mountain NP. We certainly paid our dues in time and energy, since not even the slightest activity comes easy at this elevation. As we got out of the vans in Denver, the 98°F temperature was quite a shock after the coolness of Mt Evans.

**Day 15:** Not much birding this morning before concluding the tour. Nevertheless, we managed to add a couple of new trip species. A stop at a regularly reported location on 96th Avenue near the airport produced 12 Burrowing Owls. Among the other species near here were Swainson's Hawk and Lark Bunting. A quick check of Barr Lake from 128th Avenue produced a pair of Blue Grosbeaks. Also here were Eastern Kingbird, House Wren, a pair of Bullock's Oriole feeding young and Common Yellowthroat. Heading back to the airport for our afternoon, overnight flight home, we had covered 2,800 miles and seen 195 species of birds, some excellent mammals and butterflies and some wonderful scenery.

**Day 16:** Morning arrival back in London at the end of the tour.

### MAMMALS

Black Bear	Marten	Badger
Coyote	Red Fox	Beaver
Yellowbelly Marmot	Blacktailed Prairie Dog	Rock Squirrel
Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel	Golden-mantled Squirrel	Colorado Chipmunk
Eastern Gray Squirrel	Red Squirrel	Mountain Cottontail
Pika	Elk	Mule Deer
Moose	Pronghorn	Bison
Mountain Goat	Bighorn Sheep	

### REPTILES

Short Horned Lizard

Sagebrush Lizard

Plainbelly Water Snake

**BUTTERFLIES**

Anise Swallowtail

Western Tiger Swallowtail

Two-tailed Swallowtail

Becker's White

Checkered White

Western White

Cabbage White

Stella Orangetip\*

Clouded Sulphur

Rocky Mountain Dotted Blue

Aphrodite

Calippe Fritillary

Arctic Fritillary

Gillette Checkerspot

Satyr Comma

Mourning Cloak (Camberwell Beauty)

Milbert's Tortoiseshell

American Lady

Painted Lady

Red Admiral

Weidemeyer's Admiral

Haydn's Ringlet

Common Ringlet

Rocky Mountain Duskywing

Mountain Checkered Skipper

\* Originally Sara Orangetip but now split into four different species.