

USA: South Central Rockies and Midwest –August/September 2017

Report by Sjef Öllers

Our second trip to the USA exceeded expectations with excellent sightings of Wolf, Bobcat, American Badger, North American Porcupine and Long-tailed Weasel. Swift Fox and Black-footed Ferret could be ticked as well, but views were suboptimal. Close views of both bear species were another highlight! The breeding season for birds was clearly almost over and many species had already left their breeding grounds, so I did not nearly see all the species I had hoped to see. Birding highlights nevertheless included Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Ruffed Grouse, Dusky Grouse, Greater Sage Grouse and Greater Prairie Chicken.



Bobcat

Introduction

A visit to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem was long overdue and this year we finally had the opportunity to go. I would have preferred a spring visit to Yellowstone but since we wanted to visit Arizona in spring this year, a late summer visit seemed an acceptable alternative from a mammal perspective, but was going to cost us some birds. Apart from a visit to Yellowstone/Teton, Badlands national park was considered a must visit and my wife was keen to see the dinosaur bones in Dinosaur national monument. Connecting these three destinations resulted in the itinerary below.

Even during the trip I wasn't quite sure whether we should head straight southwest from the Badlands NP towards Dinosaur NM. I probably should have followed my intuition and spent a bit more time in the Black Hills and maybe include Thunder Basin National Grassland, and then drive straight southwest down to Dinosaur National Monument after visiting Badlands NP. The grassland areas in Nebraska and northern Colorado were rather disappointing at this time of year, but curiosity got the better of me.

Late summer is not the best time to get a long bird list for the tour schedule we did. The birding was rather slow in most reserves; prairie and grassland areas in particular typically had rather slow birding, even in the morning. In forest and woodland areas birds had already formed multispecies flocks. Unsurprisingly, wetlands and riverine areas were the most rewarding areas for birding (most rewarding being Seedskadee NWR and Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge). Nevertheless, the birding in City of Rocks was better than anticipated, and Yellowstone and Grand Teton also provided some rewarding birding moments (mainly the bigger stuff such as Sandhill Crane, Trumpeter Swan, White Pelican, raptors, grouses, etc.). Sightings of warblers and flycatchers got relatively scarce from early September on in all areas visited. Woodpeckers were also remarkably hard to find, but luckily I did find two of my three main targets, Red-headed Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker. Lewis's Woodpecker remained unseen though, and unfortunately I could not find Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpecker either, despite visiting quite a number of good sites for them.

Ducks, grebes, sparrows and warblers were often present in all kinds of intermediate plumage varieties (not just eclipse plumage, also confusing plumages of fairly grown up juveniles). As a result, quite a few warblers, flycatchers, sparrows and (distant) ducks remained unidentified. As always, quite a number of mystery birds could luckily be identified by members of the fantastic [Birdforum](#) platform.

Mammalwatching overall was pretty good, but the lack of ground squirrels throughout the tour was remarkable. Ground squirrels might have largely gone underground to hibernate, but still I think we should have seen a few more above ground than we did. We were also not very successful locating small rodents despite hiking a lot and driving quite a lot after dark. This was luckily adequately compensated by the occasional burst of high-quality sightings of the larger mammal fauna, in particular in the national parks Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Badlands.



Coyote (and Black-tailed Prairie dog)

Weather

It was rather warm in the Greater Yellowstone area throughout our stay, usually high 70s/low 80s in the afternoon. It was chilly but not really cold in the morning in Grand Teton and Yellowstone. In Yellowstone we only had one brief but intense shower over six days and no rain at all in Grand Teton. Views in Grand Teton and on the Bear Tooth highway were somewhat spoiled by a permanent brown hazy smog caused by large forest fires in Montana. In the Black Hills, Badlands NP, Nebraska, Colorado and Dinosaur National Monument it was warm and sunny throughout (no rain at all except for a thunderstorm in Badlands) and temperatures typically were in the 80s or low 90s in the

afternoon. The high afternoon temperatures often resulted in balmy evenings with pleasant temperatures often until midnight, which made spotlighting very enjoyable.

Only the last two days of the tour we had substantial amounts of rain. On the 14th it was mainly showers that did not really affect our activities, but we lost the entire morning of September 15 when it rained nonstop, but it was sunny again by the time we got to the Salt Lake City area. Mosquitoes were only a nuisance in Valentine NWR, where one hour before dusk an extremely ferocious breed suddenly materialized. Crow Valley campground in Pawnee National Grassland had a manageable number of annoying mosquitoes. Otherwise insect discomfort was negligible.



Itinerary

August 25	Flight to Salt Lake City – Bear River Migration Bird Refuge
August 26	Transfer to City of Rocks NR
August 27	City of Rocks NR
August 28	Drive to Yellowstone NP – Silver Gate
August 29	Yellowstone NP – Silver Gate
August 30	Yellowstone NP – Roosevelt
August 31	Yellowstone NP – Canyon
September 1	Yellowstone NP – Silver Gate
September 2	Bear Tooth Highway / Yellowstone NP – Silver Gate
September 3	Drive to Grand Teton NP
September 4	Grand Teton NP
September 5	Grand Teton NP – Yellowstone NP – Blackwater Creek (near Cody)
September 6	Drive from Cody to Devil’s Tower National Monument via Bighorn Mountains
September 7	Black Hills and Wind Cave NP
September 8	Morning Custer State Park – afternoon Badlands NP
September 9	Badlands NP
September 10	Morning transfer to Valentine – afternoon Fort Niobrara and Valentine NWR
September 11	Valentine to Fort Collins – afternoon Pawnee National Grassland
September 12	Transfer to Dinosaur NM (via Cheyenne/Rawlins/Green River/Flaming Gorge)
September 13	Dinosaur NM
September 14	Sheep Creek Geological Trail (Flaming Gorge) – Seedskafee NWR – Fossil Butte NM
September 15	Fossil Butte NM – Cokeville Meadows NWR – Bear Lake – Antelope Island State Park
September 16	Flight back



American Badger

Accommodation

We used a variety of sources to book or look for accommodation. The usual suspects Booking.com, Trivago, and Tripadvisor were helpful, but in the remoter parts the Chamber of Commerce websites were often a better source of information for a comprehensive overview of accommodation options.

Apart from the usually excellent webpages of the National Parks Service, we found [this](#) and [this](#) website handy for Yellowstone. I think we made the bookings for accommodation inside Yellowstone NP sometime in October/November 2016 and then most of the cheaper accommodation options had gone, so it was a bit of a puzzle to get halfway affordable bookings in Yellowstone and Grand Teton in a somewhat logical order for our intended travel dates. In the end it worked out such in Yellowstone that we stayed the first two and last two nights in Silver Gate in [Pine Edge Cabins](#) (the smaller cabins close to the river on the southside of the road), which we enjoyed very much. Inbetween we had one night in Roosevelt (great location, but poor overpriced accommodation) and Canyon (monstrously big and awful skiresort feel and inevitably overpriced, but again very good location for both Hayden Valley and Mount Washburn). If I ever go back, I may try the cheaper Lake Hotel area as a base for Hayden Valley.

After quite a bit of searching for accommodation in Grand Teton we somehow ended up finding [Heart Six Ranch](#), which turned out to be good value (we got a discount) and a remarkably good location for most sites. Friendly folks too! Everywhere else finding accommodation was trivial. Comments on some of the accommodation that we stayed in are in the sections below.



Grand Prismatic Spring area in Yellowstone

Sites visited

Bear River Migration Bird Refuge

An excellent birding reserve and much more fun than Antelope Island State Park in my opinion. Spotlighting would probably be interesting as well, but the gates to the most interesting part of the reserve (Unit 2, i.e., the [Auto Tour Route](#)) open/close more or less around sunrise/sunset. Given the daytime visit restrictions I didn't expect to encounter much mammals, but we were very pleased to see three Raccoons at dusk and an inquisitive Long-tailed Weasel next morning – both were seen on the Auto Tour Route through the reserve. Birding was good, but lots of ducks were hard to determine (both because of the distance and the eclipse plumage). I was surprised that waders were rather scarce and I did not see any rail species. Species seen included White-faced Ibis, American White Pelican, Clark's and Western Grebe, Hen Harrier, Caspian Tern, Peregrine, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and a variety of duck species. The reserve publishes [handy lists](#) of their waterbird surveys, which give a good idea of what to expect in a particular month.



Long-tailed Weasel



Scenery at Bear River Migration Bird Refuge

City of Rocks National Reserve

A relatively small but scenic nature reserve with an excellent network of hiking trails. Birding was pretty good, but the mammalwatching was a little disappointing. I talked to an enthusiastic young ranger about the mammals in the area; she said that pumas are not uncommon but mostly roam the quieter forested parts of the park (she saw them about once a month). Ringtails do occur but are uncommon/elusive but the ranger did see them with some regularity; she had never seen Western Spotted Skunk. For Pygmy Rabbits I was told to try the unpaved road to Lynn and the southern part of the reserve, but according to two of the rangers sightings were rather unpredictable. Unfortunately, we did not encounter Pygmy Rabbits in both areas. Because we spent a lot of time hiking in the reserve (and had some car trouble), we did not have time to visit Castle Rock State Park and a reserve closer to Albion, but sounded like they were worth giving a shot (both for mammals and birds).

The most convenient place to stay near City of Rocks is in Almo at the Almo Inn, but when I emailed them to book a room, they mailed that we should phone them to finalize the booking, but despite phoning them a number of times I couldn't get anyone on the phone and you can't book them online. Tiring. We ate once at their restaurant, which was pretty poor. Still, their accommodation looked nice and the location is unbeatable, so it might be worth showing up and see if they have a

room if you can't reach them by phone. So in the end we stayed at Marsh Creek Inn in Albion, which was good, but it is at least a 30 minute drive to the reserve. Despite the fact that the road between Albion and Almo looked like it should have produced at least a skunk or a rodent after dark, we saw nothing. The only wildlife encounter was unfortunate: we encountered a covey of grey partridges on the road at dawn. Despite hitting the breaks several of the partridges appeared to have a death wish: at least one flew straight into the grill of the car and another one flew into the window in a way that must have been lethal (even if it didn't appear to have died instantly). Frustrating.



City of Rocks NR

Yellowstone National Park

We knew that the park was going to be busy, but I was surprised that on most days a number of roads in the park were as busy as my hometown at peak hour. If I visit the park again, it will have to be in one of the quieter months. Luckily any hiking trail longer than half a mile was quiet, so after 9 am hiking is the best way to escape the crowds.

The first afternoon in the park was spent in Lamar Valley. Unexpected was the sighting of two Mountain Goats at the red cliffs opposite the river at the Soda Butte/Lamar River trailhead. Two beavers were seen at the bridge across Lamar River, but none of the big carnivores were seen from the various viewpoints in the valley.

A pre-dawn start the next day did not produce any nocturnal mammals. Again no bear or wolf activity at the viewpoints at dawn. Midmorning we explored the Roosevelt/Mammoth/Gardiner area. Only sighting of note were four Evening Grosbeaks in Mammoth. The hoped for Bighorn Sheep did not materialize in the Gardiner/Mammoth area. A drive on the unpaved Blacktail Plateau road was uneventful and even here there was too much traffic. In the afternoon visit we visited Trout Lake (Least Chipmunk) and Lost Lake, which was pretty good with Belted Kingfisher, a male Williamson's

Sapsucker and a variety of commoner species such as Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Clark's Nutcracker, etc. Plenty of Red Squirrels and Least Chipmunks as well, and two tame Mule Deer.

The evening visit to Lamar Valley again produced nothing of note, but the presence of wolf researchers suggested that they had picked up their signal and they should at least be in the area. When it was almost dark we thought we finally had a wolf, but it turned out to be a Coyote that was hunting Pronghorn; twice the Coyote took a full-blown sprint. Pretty spectacular as a couple of times the Coyote got very close to catching one of the Pronghorns. By this point I was getting a bit restless given that we had not seen a single bear or wolf.



Bighorn Sheep

The next morning we again scanned Lamar Valley from the various viewpoints. First sighting of note were two Coyotes (at the same spot of the Pronghorn hunt yesterday), which I first called wolves just because they were biggish canines (bad case of wolf fever by then). At about 6.30-6.45 am I finally found a Black Bear about 800 metres away on the other side of the valley.

At about 8.15 am we arrived at the Hellroaring Creek Trailhead. No Pika in the rocky areas along the entrance road. The hike to the confluence of Hellroaring Creek and Yellowstone River was very nice and produced a few decent sightings: a female Williamson's Woodpecker, Osprey, Pink-sided Junco, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Northern Flicker. Mammals included Yellow Pine Chipmunk, Least Chipmunk and Pronghorn and we surprised a Coyote at close range when we walked over a small ridge. In the afternoon we tried again the Blacktail Deer Plateau and Mammoth and continued up to Sheepsteater Cliffs. Here again no Pika, but we did see Gray Jay, Uinta Chipmunk and Red Squirrel at the cliffs.

In the evening we headed back to Lamar Valley. At some point I finally saw the characteristic athletic elegance of wolves trotting effortlessly through the very far end of the valley (at least 1.5 miles away). My wife didn't quite believe me because they had gone out of view when she looked through the scope, but I urged her to get in the car and we immediately drove to the spot. The wolf researchers were already in residence. Members of the Junction-Butte pack had returned to an old bison carcass. Initially there were four black wolves, but eventually another black wolf and two grey ones showed up. They were quite far away but great to see them interacting with each other, especially when the two gray ones joined the black ones. Around dusk they eventually all headed southeast in smaller subgroups in the direction of the junction of Lamar River and Soda Butte Creek. Phew, 50+ hours in the park were required to finally see wolves.

The next day (August 31) everything finally fell into place. In the morning in Lamar Valley one of the black wolves had returned to the bison carcass. A little later I also found a Grizzly coming in from the west; it seemed to be heading in the direction of the carcass, but eventually I lost it and the bear appeared to have gone into the forest. After finishing eating from the carcass, the wolf came closer to the river giving full-frame views in the scope. We could see the wolf howling several times. Brilliant stuff. At about 8 am the wolf started walking through the valley towards the west. We were also heading that direction so we could follow/scope the wolf on and off for at least 45 minutes.



Wolf in Lamar Valley

Our next stop was the Washburn Trail; the weather was perfect for hiking (sunny with a thin veil of high clouds), not too warm, not too cold. Less than 200 metres into the trail we encountered a female Black Bear with two cubs.



Black Bear family on Mount Washburn Trail

This excellent start set the tone for the rest of the walk: at least eight Golden-mantled Squirrels, 4+ Pika, Least and Uinta Chipmunk, Red Squirrel, Yellow-bellied Marmot (only one), three female Bighorn Sheep and a male Black Bear were seen as well. On the way back we were photographing the three Bighorn Sheep right next to us on the track (at 2-3 metres distance). When I turned around, a Black Bear appeared on the road maybe 30 metres in front of us. She started to walk towards us and seconds later two cubs followed (it was the same trio we had seen at the start of the walk). This led to a comical synchronized backward retreat of the two of us and the three Bighorn Sheep. At some point the sheep decided that the two homo sapiens had to be bear food first and raced off. Of course, the bear just ambled along the track for a couple of dozens of metres before heading into the forest again.



This is how animals react to us

Birding was pretty good too and included Cassin's Finch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pink-sided Junco, the ever-present American Robin, Clark's Nutcracker and Gray jay. The best sighting was a Prairie Falcon that swooped past us at less than four metres on the ridge that leads to the top of the mountain. Possibly even better was a textbook case of millennialitis; a guy in his early twenties was so glued to his smart phone that he did not notice that a Dusky Grouse crossed to the other side of the track by sneaking around his legs and the guy almost literally stumbled over the grouse! Even the grouse appeared offended.

After a lunch break in Canyon we drove through Hayden valley, stopped at LeHardy Rapids (one Harlequin Duck, Common Merganser and Gray Jay) and the Lake Hotel area (no pockets gophers active, plenty of burrows though). Random stops in Hayden Valley produced Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, a variety of ducks and a few cormorants.

In the afternoon we went back to Hayden Valley to a site near Alum Creek along the Yellowstone River where wolves had killed and by now completely devoured an elk about 4-5 days earlier; only half a mile south there was now a bison carcass. We heard that both grizzlies and wolves had been seen in the area the preceding days. When we arrived at 5.30-6 pm about 200 people were waiting on a low hill overlooking the river valley with the bison carcass. While waiting we saw Hen Harrier, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, American Kestrel, Lesser Scaup, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Canada Goose and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Only at dusk two grizzlies emerged from the forest simultaneously. After a short staring contest one grizzly headed down the valley, crossed the river with remarkable ease and claimed the carcass. The other grizzly stayed put at the forest edge on the other side of the river. When it really got too dark to see well, we left. Allegedly two wolves showed up in the valley on the other side of the valley after we had left, but you would probably have needed night vision equipment to get halfway decent views.

The next morning we headed back to the site with the bison carcass, but the entire river valley was shrouded in a thick layer of fog. People that had arrived before us informed us that wolves and/or grizzlies had been on the carcass. Every now and then we got tantalizing glimpses of the carcass.

A rather chilly two-hour wait ensued; this was interesting in its own right because we could hear wolves howling very clearly. First it was just one animal howling from right below us in the river valley. Eventually we heard at least three wolves calling from various directions. The wolf howls emerging from the fog from every corner of the valley was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. By about 8am the fog finally started to thin rapidly and we finally could see the until now mystery animal on the carcass. It was a whitish wolf from the Mollies pack. It stayed for about 15-20 minutes and then left. A little later a Grizzly showed up briefly at the carcass but left after about 5-10 minutes. The white wolf for another 20 minutes before it trotted off to the northwest.



The "dirty blonde" wolf at the bison carcass

Once the fog had lifted completely and we could see across the entire valley; more wolves materialized, first two black wolves, then another black wolf, and then a grey and black one. Even the gray/white alpha female showed up briefly. They all stayed on the other side of the river. I wondered why they didn't go to the carcass, but a little later we discovered that a grizzly had been lounging along the river edge just out of view from our first vantage point, so maybe that put them off. The wolves were calling and howling regularly; they were a little far for good photos but the scope views in perfect morning light were fantastic. By about 9.30-10 am at least five wolves were still in the valley but they were all resting in the sagebrush out of view. We decided to move on and did some touristy stuff including a visit to Artist Point.



Four black wolves from the Mollies Pack

After lunch we walked the Yellowstone River Picnic Trail; it was pretty warm, but we still saw a group of Bighorn Sheep, Uinta and Least Chipmunk, Osprey, Rock Wren and Mountain Bluebird. My wife took the afternoon off and I first did a leisurely visit to Lamar Valley. No wolf activity (or wolf watchers) here, but a stand-off between a male Pronghorn and Coyote was nice. Given the wealth of big carnivore action over the last 24 hours, I decided to check out the Soda Butte Creek area and the area around Baronette Peak. No moose but Baronette Peak produced eight Mountain Goats including a mother with one young. Tired from the long days I made a relatively early retreat to Silver Gate around dusk to catch up on sleep.

We decided it was time for something different, so September 2 we headed up the Bear Tooth Highway. Plenty of Mule Deer and the odd Bison along the first 20 miles. The pass area is beautiful with great views but I could not find my target bird species, Black Rosy-Finch, although a group of 10 birds that flew past appeared to be this species. Around the pass there were hardly any snow patches, which is where I had hoped to find them. In the pass area (and the first miles below the pass towards the Top of the World café) we saw among others an adult Golden Eagle, Swainson's Hawk, White-crowned Sparrow, American Pipit and Pygmy Nuthatch. American Pika and Yellow-bellied Marmot were seen from the road near Gardner Lake and just below the pass. Other mammal sightings included Yellow Pine and Uinta Chipmunk and Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel. By noon we drove back to Silver Gate to eat at the Log Cabin (good food!).

In the afternoon we gave the bison carcass site at Alum Creek in Hayden Valley another try, which also would allow us to make a "night drive" back to Silver Gate. Not much happened all evening until

a big black Grizzly showed up at about 8 pm. A little later another Grizzly appeared and this eventually led to an amazing confrontation between the two fighting each other in the river. Unfortunately, the light was already really bad for photography by that time. The drive back in the dark was not as productive as I hoped, but we did see a Red Fox near Roosevelt and several mice (probably all Deer Mice, the two that froze on the road in the beam of the car light definitely were).



The blackish Grizzly in Hayden valley

On September 3 we had the long drive from Silver Gate to Grand Teton ahead of us. We slept in until about 6.30 pm and had a proper breakfast. Lamar Valley produced nothing of note. At Dunraven pass we briefly saw a Grizzly. We made one more stop at the bison carcass, where the black Grizzly was still present. And far away (at least a mile) a wolfwatcher pointed us to two wolves resting under a pine tree at the forest edge. We could make out the silhouettes but not much more with the scope magnification at 60x. We then did some touristy stuff visiting the Mud Cauldron and Sulphur Springs area. The lunch stop at the restaurant in Grant Village was pretty good. Otherwise the drive to Grand Teton was uneventful and at times annoyingly busy.

Grand Teton National Park

This park felt even more overcrowded than Yellowstone. Even quite a number of the hiking trails were overrun. After checking in at our accommodation (Heart Six Ranch, recommended) at about 2.30-3 pm and a short break, we headed to the Twin Ocean Lake area in the afternoon. We first hiked the trail along the northern edge of the lake. The vegetation here was very high, dense and lush; we heard a couple of Dusky Grouse scurrying through the undergrowth (without seeing them) and then I stalked a small mammal in the dense undergrowth hoping it would be one of the mustelids but turned out to be a Red Squirrel. My wife got a bit of a “sudden appearance of grizzly on trail” panic attack, so after a while we turned around and walked the trail that connects Emma Matilda and Two Ocean Lake, which was more open but also less exciting. Only common birds and mammals here.

We returned to the parking at the trailhead and this was a productive birding site: Grey Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Masked Yellowthroat, Gray Jay, Western Tanager, Song Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, hard-to-ID Empidonax flycatchers and one Common Nighthawk were seen. Driving back to the main road we first saw a female Moose and a little later a Grizzly with two cubs right next to the road. About half an hour before sunset we arrived at Oxbow Bend Turnout. This produced three beavers, and poor views of Otter and Muskrat. On the way back to our accommodation we saw a Striped Skunk cross the road and narrowly escaping the usual roadkill fate.



Grizzlies at Two Ocean Lake

The next morning we saw Elk and Mule Deer west of Moran Jct and in the Willow Flats area. Signal Mountain Road produced more Elk and Mule Deer, Least Chipmunk, five ridiculously tame Dusky Grouse but little else. We then drove to Death Canyon Trailhead. We saw a Black bear quietly feeding at the viewpoint over Phelps Lake. One Pika was seen higher up on the trail towards Alaska Basin. Uinta and Least Chipmunks and Red Squirrels were common. Birds seen included Hairy Woodpecker, House Wren, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee and Wilson's Warbler.

Late morning/early afternoon we explored the Mormon Row area. Here saw another Black Bear at the foot of the Blacktail Butte hill and the only four Bison that we would see in Grand Teton. Birds included Mountain Bluebird and Brewer's Sparrow. A cross-country dash on foot through the sage brush did not produce any ground squirrels or sage grouse (or much else for that matter).

The Moose Ponds Trail seemed to be birdless, but all the fun was in the second half: we surprised three Ruffed Grouse in the willows next to the lakes. A bit further we saw a Wandering Garter Snake, a number of commoner species and nice views of a Sandhill Crane pair with a juvenile.

At Schwabacher Landing we saw a female Moose with a young foraging at very close range along the river. A decent selection of birds was seen but nothing out of the ordinary. Common Nighthawk was probably the most exciting species. An after-dark exploration of the unpaved roads in the Fork Creek Ranch/Mormon Row area produced one Common Nighthawk, but zero mammals. Close to our accommodation a Red Fox crossed the road.



Mule Deer



Moose

Our last morning in Grand Teton we first stopped at Oxbow Bend; this resulted in better views of a Beaver. We then hiked the String Lake Trail and a bit of the Jenny Lake Trail; none of the hoped for rarer woodpeckers appeared. Actually the only woodpecker seen was a Northern Flicker. A bird flock near the parking held Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Mountain Chickadee. Red Squirrel, Least Chipmunk and Mule Deer were common.

We then headed back to Yellowstone, stopped at Grand Prismatic Spring, possibly the most impressive scenic/geological feature in the park. We exited the park via the East Gate (interesting scenery between the gate and Bridge Bay) and drove to Blackwater Creek Ranch (about 45 minutes west of Cody). Nice cabins and beautiful surroundings of dry canyons/badlands. Uinta Chipmunk and Dipper were the most interesting sightings here. The friendly owner said that both bear species show up regularly at the ranch. Their thinly veiled dislike of wolves was unfortunate and a little irrational (“why are there so little moose in Yellowstone then?”).

Bighorn Mountains

We drove into the area on Highway 14 via Greybull. Just east of Shell you first drive through some badlands-like areas before entering a beautiful Mediterranean-looking canyon area. The higher areas were a little boring with rather monotonous-looking pine forests and grassland/meadows for cattle farming; those parts reminded us of the German Black Forest or even an high-altitude version of the Belgian Ardennes. We stopped in Dayton for petrol and coffee. This little town will not be forgotten because it was the only place where we got a take-away coffee that actually tasted like coffee and was not of the usual brown water variety.

Devil's Tower National Monument

This slightly out of the way reserve is pleasant enough with good hiking options for such a small reserve; several tame mammal species roam the park (Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, and Black-tailed Prairiedog). I mainly included this small reserve on the itinerary to try for a number of woodpeckers (Lewis's, Red-headed, Black-backed and Three-toed) but the birding was very slow. For the migratory species it was apparently a little late in the season. The first three kilometers of the Red Beds trail we saw about three birds, all robins. Luckily there was a little peak in activity during the last mile of the hike. A small bird flock included Brown Creeper, Rock Wren, Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Nice was a largish group (15+) of Wild Turkeys and a Prairie Falcon circling the Devils Tower. Just as we were about to return to the car park, we finally found some woodpeckers, several North Flickers and finally the outrageously stylish Red-headed Woodpecker (an adult and begging juvenile).

We stayed in Hulett in a cabin of the pleasant Hulett Motel. The drive back around dusk produced several dozens of Mule Deer and a few Common Nighthawks, but nothing else.



White-tailed Deer

Black Hills/Custer State Park/Wind Cave National Park

We made our first stop in the Black Hills at Hell Canyon trail (near Jewel Cave NM). We first walked the upper part of the trail that skirts along the upper edge of the canyon before descending into the canyon. Bird activity was a little slow in the beginning. Best species were a very white Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (which I first mistook for a Ferruginous Hawk), Sharp-shinned Hawk and White-winged Junco. The canyon valley was livelier with American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Plumbeous Vireo, Cedar Waxwing and Spotted Towhee among the species. Remarkable was a group of at least 500 American Robins feeding on berries in the canyon. Woodpeckers again put in a relatively poor appearance: a subadult Red-headed Woodpecker, a male Hairy Woodpecker and about a dozen Northern Flickers were seen. The only mammal of note was an Eastern Fox Squirrel. Least Chipmunks were common. Back on the road near Hell Canyon we saw a Townsend's Solitaire.

We stayed in Hot Springs near Wind Cave National Park. After a good lunch at Woolly's in Hot Springs we headed to the park. As per usual a talk to the park staff at the visitor centre was not particularly informative. The ranger on duty became really formal and defensive when I asked about the Black-footed Ferret excursions that they advertise on the website of the park. They do organize night walks occasionally to look for ferrets (or at least so they claim), but only in July.

We first tried the Cold Brook Canyon trail but several large bison males blocked the path and when we tried to circumvent them offtrail we encountered a lot more bison. So we headed back and walked the Wind Cave Canyon trail. This produced among others Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Mountain Bluebird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Chipping Sparrow, and an inevitable non-ID-able Empidonax flycatcher. A slow drive on the quiet unpaved roads in the park produced at least four Coyotes, but otherwise nothing out of the ordinary. Pronghorn, Bison, and Black-tailed Prairiedogs are common throughout the park.

The next morning we explored Custer State Park for a couple of hours. The Four Mile Draw road in Custer State Park is usually good for woodpeckers but again the results were disappointing: a few Northern Flickers and one Hairy Woodpecker. The Wildlife Loop produced Wild Turkey, Cedar Waxwing, and Ferruginous Hawk. No mammals of note, but Bison and Pronghorn are very common.



American Bison

Badlands National Park

One of the highlights of the trip: superb scenery and the mammalwatching exceeded my expectations. We arrived on a Friday and it was unbelievably crowded on the main road through the park, almost Yellowstone/Teton-style busy. Saturday strangely was much quieter. We luckily entered the park via the truck stop hamlet called Scenic following the quiet unpaved Sage Creek Road. Just before entering the park we saw our only Brown Thrasher of the tour. Inside the park we saw a group of seven Bighorn Sheep, Coyote, Bison, Pronghorn and Black-tailed Prairie dog. Birds were scarce. Ferruginous Hawk was the only sighting of note. After checking in at our accommodation in Wall we went back to the park. Near the entrance we encountered a group of 35+ Bighorn Sheep.

Along the Conata Basin Road we saw Red-headed Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe, Rock Wren, and Mule Deer. We scanned the two prairie dog towns about 5-7 miles south of the park border. This produced a Golden Eagle, a male Hen Harrier, several Ferruginous Hawks, Horned Lark, at least four Coyotes and best of all an American Badger.

We waited until it got dark, but things only got interesting near Roberts Prairie dog Town, where we saw a Prairie Rattlesnake, more Bighorn Sheep and an American Porcupine. This was a species I really hoped to see here, so I was really glad we ran into one on the first night. All afternoon it had been humid and there had been lightning in the distance almost all afternoon. After seeing the porcupine it appeared that the thunderstorm was now really coming our way quickly. A very strong wind started to blow making spotlighting rather difficult because the dust scattered the lightbeam to the point of just being a diffuse halo. So we headed back to Wall and a little later the storm and plenty of rain reached Wall.



Bighorn Sheep

The next morning we first headed back to Conata Basin but saw nothing new. At Roberts Prairie dog Town both a Golden Eagle and a Ferruginous Hawk were devouring a prairie dog. After some careful scanning we finally saw several Burrowing Owls, but again no ground squirrels. An adult Bald Eagle was also looking for opportunistic opportunity at the Roberts Prairie dog Town. After eating in the restaurant in the park (the vegetarian Navajo Taco was quite ok) we visited the Cliff Shelf Trail and the area round Cedar Pass. Most exciting sighting was a Prairie Falcon. The juniper forest at the Cliff Shelf Trail was deserted birdwise. By about 5 pm we were back at the Conata Basin Road. We now also found a Burrowing Owl, more Coyotes and a Swift Fox put in a frustratingly brief appearance relocating from one burrow to another.

We then drove to Roberts Prairie dog Town. My wife said "there is a badger" but I couldn't see it until I realized it was right next to the car at my wife's side of the car. Remarkably, it didn't run away although it was a little anxious. We could observe the badger at close range for several minutes until another car showed up. The badger walked about 150 yards away from the road. I showed the

badger to a friendly elderly couple who were interested in mammals and had only seen the badger once before.



Eastern Cottontail



American Badger

My wife and I stayed at the spot for a bit longer. A little later my wife said “there is another badger”. And indeed further away a badger was having a stand-off with a coyote. Very cool! I then systemically scanned the entire prairiedog town hoping to find Swift Foxes, but instead I found two more badgers! At one point I could make out four different individuals hunting at the same time. Insane!



Badger and Coyote stand-off at dusk in Badlands NP

In the far, far distance I saw three smallish looking canines with binoculars. I thought that I had found Swift Foxes, but it turned out they were mid-sized Coyote puppies when I put the scope on them. After dark we found another Prairie Rattlesnake and now a much bigger Porcupine, both still in the prairiedog town area. This porcupine cooperated much better with the spotlight so I could take some half-decent photos. Right at the edge of the park I also saw two laser-beam lights bounce across a field. The ferret! But it disappeared before I could get decent views and it was again at the far end of the spotlight. Frustrating! On our way back to Wall we saw countless Mule Deer, more Coyotes, what appeared to be a Bobcat (but again just outside the reach of my spotlight) and yet another Badger. I dropped my wife off in Wall and drove back to Conata basin (three White-tailed Jack-rabbits and one Porcupine) and Sage Creek Road (two more porcupines and two Coyotes), but not the hoped for better views of Swift Fox and Black-footed Ferret.

In Badlands NP we stayed in Frontier Cabins at the southern edge of Wall (a more practical location than Cedar Pass Lodge in my opinion, nice cabins, good service and better breakfast than the usual Super 8, etc. chains). Don't be put off by the (let's say unique) reception inside a massive hall stored with fireworks, Native American regalia, etc. They also serve breakfast, but rather late.

Nebraska – Valentine NWR and Fort Niobrara NWR

Valentine in the sandhills area of Nebraska is a friendly little town with several nature reserves nearby. Fort Niobrara NWR is only four miles from the Main Street and Valentine NWR is 17 miles south of town. Southwest of Valentine there is also Samuel McKelvie National Forest, which we did not visit. We stayed at the friendly and excellent Niobrara Lodge (good supermarket across the road).

In Fort Niobrara NWR we only had time to walk the nature trail and make a short drive on the tracks near the park's HQ. It was mid-afternoon and hot, so it was relatively quiet. Still the nature trail is a pleasant walk that should have excellent birding on a morning walk in spring and summer. Sightings included Eastern Fox Squirrel, a single Turkey Vulture, Wild Turkey, Blue Jay (heard), Black-capped Chickadee (heard), and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

We then visited Valentine NWR in the late afternoon/evening: the park appeared almost completely deserted when we drove the auto tour in the northwest part of the park. Most of the other roads in the park are narrow sandy tracks and require a high-clearance or 4WD vehicle. The drive in on the Auto Tour Route towards the west was rather discouraging: this was clearly a hunting reserve – deer and ducks would all panic instantly, but even some of the other birds appeared unusually skittish. The first 1.5 hours we hardly saw birds and mammals, save a few Mule and White-tailed Deer, a few duck species and Killdeer. Just when we were about to make an early departure from the reserve, I decided to make a last effort at Duck Lake. This proved unexpectedly rewarding: I ran into a flock that included Eastern Bluebird, Downy Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow warbler, American Robin, and a possible Willow Flycatcher. In the same area we saw Hermit thrush, Eastern Kingbird, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Flicker, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, and Eastern Cottontail. At dusk we saw in quick succession Great-horned Owl and Short-eared Owl, Beaver and Muskrat. Again no nocturnal specialties were seen. Frustratingly we saw a freshly killed Raccoon and Striped Skunk on the highway back to Valentine town.

Pawnee National Grassland

The most disappointing reserve on this tour. The grasslands appeared rather deserted. We visited the campground twice and this area had the best bird and mammal activity. Birds seen here included Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Common Nighthawk, Yellow Warbler and a Bullock's Oriole. We also drove the auto route twice, mid-afternoon and in the evening. Strangely bird activity was better between 1 and 3 pm than on our afternoon/evening visit. Vesper Sparrow and Horned Lark were pretty common, but otherwise most of the sparrows were hard to determine because they would rarely stay on wires long enough to get good views or photos. Apart from a few American Kestrels and one Swainson's Hawk we didn't see any raptors. No sign of the Mountain Plover and I could not positively identify any longspurs. The spotlighting was underwhelming as well. We probably should have spotlighted longer but having driven the route up and down twice and only seeing both jack-rabbit species and the occasional Mule Deer we got fed up and drove back to our hotel.

Dinosaur National Monument

A great reserve with beautiful scenery and excellent hiking options and decent bird- and mammalwatching. When we arrived at the gate on the Utah side of the reserve, the ranger asked

“are you here for the event?” Event? For some reason there was some festive activity at one of the campgrounds: a caravan of several dozens of spotlessly clean SUVs and a few buses raced into the park at about the same time we arrived.

Upon arrival we quickly stopped at the visitor centre, which was about to close, to get some hiking and mammal info. One of the rangers showed me a smartphone photo of a bobcat. “Oh I made this half an hour ago just around the corner here”. Aaargh, sheer agony! We drove to the other event-free campground along Green River but even that one was rather busy. We hiked the River Trail but apart from a few Mule Deer and a few common bird species we didn’t see much here. We drove the road towards Hog/Box Canyon, but we only saw more Mule Deer. Intrigued by the bobcat sighting we headed back to the area around the visitor centre. From here we had good views of the ungulates feeding on the fields on the other side of the river: 70+ Elk, Pronghorn and more Mule Deer. A single White-tailed Prairiedog was seen not far from the visitor centre. The evening temperature was perfect, Desert Cottontails all over place, plenty of cover, rocky terrain: bobcat nirvana. Well, not tonight, just as things might have gotten interesting the “event people” suddenly all came racing back to the visitor centre. It turned out that they actually had to go to the dinosaur bones exhibition hall, but it was just total mayhem around the visitor centre and the entrance road to the dinosaur exhibition hall. So we headed back to Naples/Vernal. We stayed at the relatively new Microtel Inn, which was excellent value.



Desert Voices trail in Dinosaur NM

The next morning I first checked out the area around the visitor centre: soon I found very fresh Bobcat footprints. We checked out the area for half an hour finding footprints of a variety of small and medium-sized mammals, but we only saw Desert Cottontail. A more thorough check in the late afternoon seemed in order. Next we walked the Desert Voices trail: birding was relatively slow but included Pinyon Jay, Plumbeous Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker (at the campground at the start of the

trail) and Western Scrub Jay. Cliff Chipmunk, Rock Squirrel and Desert Cottontail were the only mammals seen. In the afternoon we walked the Box Canyon, Hog Canyon and Sounds of Silence trails. More beautiful scenery but again relatively slow birdwise: another Plumbeous Vireo, Golden Eagle and House Finch were the best species. Highlight (apart from the scenery) was a beautiful Gopher Snake.

In the late afternoon we drove back to the visitor centre and I was determined to comb out the entire area. This proved unnecessary since there was a smallish bobcat at the entrance to the visitor centre when we showed up at the parking. I could get a few record shots but the animal seemed a little startled by our sudden appearance and disappeared in the undergrowth. I told my wife to stay put. At some point I watched to my left and there it was: a normal-sized bobcat and then another one but smaller, and another one, and another one. A female with three medium-sized cubs! The female was clearly in hunting mode and started stalking through the sage brush around the car park. We didn't want to disturb her and just watched them from the car park. For at least 30 minutes we could watch them from there; usually there was at least one cat waiting in ambush on the walkway but sometimes all four regrouped at the car park. The cats kept about 40-50 metres between them and us, but otherwise tolerated our presence. Pretty spectacular. When the light was getting too poor to take pictures we left. On the way back to Vernal a Raccoon materialized on the road out of nowhere; instead of walking away from the car it suddenly jumped onto our side of the road. We managed to stop the car by the narrowest of margins.



Seedskadee NWR

A relatively unknown reserve in southwestern Wyoming. We arrived at about 1 pm in windy and rainy weather. Luckily the sky had cleared after talking to the ranger, so we drove the park roads for about 2 hours after which the next bad-weather front hit the park. Our plan was to visit the reserve again next morning but the weather was unfortunately so bad that we didn't even try. The park rangers in this park were the friendliest, most enthusiastic and most informed rangers we talked to on this trip. The advice we got for a number of bird species was spot on, and if we had spent some time in the reserve in the evening/morning I am sure we would have seen some of the more interesting mammals too. Bobcats occur but are rarely seen. Otters are present too, but rather

difficult to see. Beaver, Muskrat, White-tailed Prairiedog, Coyote, Wyoming Ground Squirrel in spring/summer, both deer species and Moose should all be doable. Striped Skunk and Raccoon also are quite common, although the former has become more difficult because the local coyotes eat them with gusto. I also asked whether they had Spotted Skunk in the reserve, but the ranger had only seen this species once in five years (under the hood of his car!).

The reserve was great for close views of Golden and Bald Eagle, but we also saw a variety of duck species, the odd wader, Trumpeter Swan, Osprey, two coot species, etc. To my surprise we saw 25+ Sage Grouse mid-afternoon (2 pm). Usually they are more active early or late in the day but maybe the cool overcast weather kept them active. In this reserve a lot of male ducks had already reverted to their full breeding plumage, a welcome diversion from the all-brown ducks throughout the trip.

Fossil Butte National Monument

The reserve is tiny by American standards but it is worth a quick stop. I spent here several hours late afternoon/early evening on September 14 to look for Pygmy Rabbit, but had no success. Still, I did run into yet another American Badger at about seven metres from the car not far from the visitor centre. White-tailed Jackrabbits were easy to see around the visitor centre. The road uphill to the nature trail produced several Greater Sage Grouse. Higher up on the slopes there were Elk and Mule Deer. Around dusk I explored some of the sage brush between the visitor centre and the nature trail on foot, but despite a large number of holes and burrows I only flushed one cottontail and one jack-rabbit. I left about 9.15-9.30 pm and probably should have spotlighted a bit longer, but lack of enthusiasm, fatigue and the dreary weather made me go back to the Super 8 in Kemmerer.

The next day we woke up to nonstop heavy rain so we cancelled our planned Seedskadee visit and went back to Fossil Butte because my wife wanted to have a look at the collection in the visitor centre.

Antelope Island State Park

We visited on a Friday afternoon and it was ridiculously busy. Birding along the causeway was not particularly pleasant with cars racing by every five seconds. Most ducks and gulls were so far away that determination was impossible (also due to heat haze). We then drove down the east coast road (Pronghorn, Mule Deer, Bison) and walked part of the Frary Peak Trail, which produced a juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Hen Harrier, Rock Wren and yet another non-ID-able Empidonax flycatcher.



Seedskadee NWR and White-tailed Jack-rabbit in Fossil Butte NM

MAMMALS

Big Brown Bat *Eptesicus fuscus* – seen in Yellowstone NP, a local naturalist/guide identified the species

Unidentified Bats – at least two species seen in Badlands NP, also one species in Dinosaur NM

Deer mouse *Peromyscus maniculatus* – seen quite well in Yellowstone NP (both at Canyon and Roosevelt camps) and on the road in Hayden and Lamar Valley

North American Porcupine *Erethizon dorsatum* – one on the first night drive in BNP and a total of four on the second night drive in BNP



Two of the porcupines seen in Badlands NP

American Beaver *Castor canadensis* – two seen well at the Lamar River bridge in Yellowstone NP, three and two, respectively, on two visits to Oxbow Bend, two at Hackberry Lake in Valentine NWR

Fox Squirrel *Sciurus niger* – one at Hell Canyon in the Black Hills, one at Fort Niobrara NWR, the two seen in Albion (Idaho) must have been introduced

Pine aka American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* – abundant in Grand Teton NP, common to very common in Yellowstone NP, Wind Cave NP, Black Hills, Devils Tower NM, Custer SP

White-tailed Prairie dog *Cynomys leucurus* – four in Dinosaur NM, two in Seedskaelee NWR, one near Greybull (Wyoming)

Black-tailed Prairie dog *Cynomys ludovicianus* – common in Wind Cave NP, Custer State Park, and Badlands NP



White-tailed Prairie dog



Black-tailed Prairie dog

Yellow-bellied Marmot *Marmota flaviventris* – one on the Mount Washburn Trail, one on the rock above Gardner Lake on the Beartooth Highway, at least three but very shy in rocky areas just below pass on the western side

Rock Squirrel *Otospermophilus variegatus* – one in Dinosaur NM

Golden-mantled Ground-Squirrel *Callospermophilus lateralis* – one flushed on the Creek Towers Trail in COR, common (10+) on the Mount Washburn Trail in Yellowstone NP



Yellow-bellied Marmot



Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel

Richardson's Ground-Squirrel *Urocitellus richardsonii* – one in COR

Yellow-pine Chipmunk *Tamias amoenus* – uncommon, seen on Hellroaring Creek Trail, Artist's Point, Bear Tooth Highway

Cliff Chipmunk *Tamias dorsalis* – fairly common in COR, two in Dinosaur NM

Least Chipmunk *Tamias minimus* – the commonest chipmunk on the tour: fairly common to common in COR, Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP and Black Hills/Wind Cave NP/Custer State Park

Uinta Chipmunk *Tamias umbrinus* – only about 4-5 sightings in the Grand Teton NP and Yellowstone NP area, one in Flaming Gorge NRA

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* – one seen well in Valentine NWR at Hackberry Lake, a probable one at Oxbow Bend

American Pika *Ochotona princeps* – at least four on the Mount Washburn Trail, at least two in the Beartooth Pass area (look for them on the rocks at parking overlooking Gardner Lake or rocky areas just below pass on the western side), one on the Death Canyon trail in Grand Teton NP



American Pika



Pine Squirrel

Desert Cottontail *Sylvilagus audubonii* – common in Dinosaur NM, several in the grassland areas of Wind Cave NP

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus* – common in Badlands NP, two on the Wind Cave Canyon trail, a few in Pawnee NG

Mountain Cottontail *Sylvilagus nuttallii* – a few seen around dawn and dusk in COR

Black-tailed Jackrabbit *Lepus californicus* – two on the road to Lynn southeast of COR, at least four in Pawnee NG,

White-tailed Jackrabbit *Lepus townsendii* – three at night in Conata Basin, a total of four in the evening at FBNM, at least eight at night in Pawnee NG

Bobcat *Lynx rufus* – a female with three kittens at Dinosaur NM (and a possible sighting between Wall and Badlands NP)



Bobcat kittens

Swift Fox *Vulpes velox* – one seen briefly in Conata basin in BNP

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – one seen at night near Roosevelt Lodge, one near Heart Six Ranch in Grand Teton after dark

Coyote *Canis Latrans* – heard in COR, one or possibly two hunting pronghorn at full speed on August 30, two in Hayden Valley near a bison carcass on August 31, one in Lamar Valley on September 1, one at close range on the Hellroaring Creek Trail, one near Wapiti (Wyoming), about 3-4 on each drive in Wind Cave NP and especially in the quieter parts of the park, between 1 and 6 on drives in Badlands NP and Conata Basin, one at Sheep Creek Geological Loop



Coyote

Gray Wolf *Canis lupus* – five black and two grey individuals of the Junction-Butte pack in Lamar Valley on August 30, one black individual of the Junction-Butte pack in Lamar Valley on August 31, four black, one white and two gray wolves of the Mollies pack in Hayden valley near Alum Creek on September 1, one of the Mollies pack (just the head was visible) in Hayden Valley near Alum Creek on September 3

American Black Bear *Ursus americanus* – one distant animal (about 600-800 metres) on August 30 in Lamar Valley, a male and a mother with two cubs on Mount Washburn at close range (less than 50 metres), one at about 400 metres in Grand Teton NP near Mormon Row, one at about 80-100 metres on the Death Canyon trail in Grand Teton NP



American Black Bear



Grizzly cub

Grizzly/Brown Bear *Ursus arctos horribilis* – one at about 600-700 metres in Lamar valley on August 31, one at about 300 metres Dunraven pass on September 3, at least three different males at a bison carcass in Hayden valley on August 31 and September 1 and 2, a female with two cubs in Grand Teton NP near Two Ocean Lake

Raccoon *Procyon lotor* – three in Bear River, one just outside Dinosaur NM

Long-tailed Weasel *Mustela frenata* – one in Bear River MBR



Long-tailed Weasel

Black-footed Ferret *Mustela nigripes* – one seen poorly practically out of range of the spotlight near Roberts Prairiedog town

American Badger *Taxidea taxus* – one in the afternoon in Conata Basin south of Badlands NP, four seen at the same time at Roberts Prairiedog town, one seen between Wall and Badlands NP, one seen at very close range in Fossil Butte NM

North American River Otter *Lontra canadensis* – one seen briefly several times Oxbow Bend

Striped Skunk *Mephitis mephitis* – one crossing the road just after dark near Heart Six Ranch

Elk *Cervus canadensis* – remarkably low numbers seen in Yellowstone NP , about ten at Willow Flats at sunrise in Grand Teton NP, eight on Signal Mountain Road, 10+ around Moran Jct, about forty at dusk in Fossil Butte NM

Moose *Alces alces* – a female along the road to Two Ocean Lake in Grand Teton NP, a female with a young at Schwabacher’s Landing in Grand Teton NP



Moose

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* – common to very common through most of the tour, about 5-6 in COR, two seen in Bear River MBR, in Grand Teton NP seen on Signal Mountain Road, near Moran Jct, Death Canyon trail, Taggart Lake, easy to see in the area around Devils Tower NM and Wind Cave NP, about 5-10 in Dinosaur NM,

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus* – very common in Wind Cave NP and Devils Tower NM, also seen along the Sundance-Newcastle Road,

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana* – about 20-50 daily in Lamar Valley, common roadside mammal in Wyoming, small numbers (<10) in Fossil Butte NM, Pawnee NG, Badlands NP, Wind Cave NP and Custer SP



Pronghorn

White-tailed Deer

American Bison *Bison bison* – common in Yellowstone NP, only four in Grand Teton NP, about two dozens free-roaming in BNP, two in AISP

Mountain Goat *Oreamnos americanus* – two at the red cliffs opposite the Soda Butte/Lamar River trailhead/car park and eight at the cliffs of Baronette Peak

Bighorn Sheep *Ovis canadensis* – three tame animals on Mount Washburn, seven females and juveniles on the Yellowstone River Picnic Trail, a total of six sightings in Badlands NP including a group of 40, ten on the Sheep Creek Geological Trail (south of Flaming Gorge)



Common Merganser

BIRD LIST

Canada goose *Branta Canadensis* – common to very common, seen in (among other places)

Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP, Seedskadee NWR, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Valentine NWR and often on route

Trumpeter swan *Cygnus buccinators* – small numbers in Hayden Valley in Yellowstone NP, Valentine NWR and Seedskadee NWR

Wood Duck *Aix Sponsa* – 10+ in Valentine NWR (two males still had a recognizable breeding plumage)

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors* – common in Bear River MBR, Seedskadee NWR

Cinnamon Teal *Spatula cyanoptera* – 10+ seen in Bear River MBR

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* – 20+ seen in Bear River MBR, 50+ at AISP,

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* – 10+ seen in Bear River MBR, 20+ in Seedskadee NWR

American Wigeon *Mareca americana* – one of the commoner Ducks on the trip, seen in Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP, Bear River MBR, Seedskadee NWR, Valentine NWR and AISP (among other places)

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – common to very common in wetlands and along rivers in nature rivers, seen in Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP, Seedskadee NWR, Bear River Migratory Bird refuge, AISP and Valentine NWR

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* – a few seen in Bear River MBR, a few in Hayden Valley, a group in flight over Pocatello

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* – common in Bear River MBR, small number in Yellowstone NP and Grand Teton NP

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* – at least five in Seedskadee NWR (two males in more or less breeding plumage)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* – several groups in Lamar Valley and Hayden Valley

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* – several at Seedskadee NWR

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* – one at LeHardy rapids

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* – regular sightings in Yellowstone NP and Grand Teton NP

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* – regular sightings in Yellowstone NP (especially Hayden Valley), a few in Grand Teton NP

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* – 60+ at AISP, four in Yellowstone NP on a small lake on Blacktail Plateau

Gray Partridge *Perdix perdix* – one party of about 8 birds near COR

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* – 15+ in Devils Tower NM, three in Fort Niobrara NWR, small group near Valentine NWR

Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* – about 15-20 in Bear River

Greater Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus* – about 20 in Seedskaadee NWR, at least four in FBNM

Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* – three seen on the Moose Ponds trail in Grand Teton NP

Dusky Grouse *Dendragapus obscurus* – one crossing the track at close range on Mt Washburn Trail at about 10 am, five rather tame animals on Signal Mountain Road in Grand Teton NP at about 7.30-8 am in the morning

Greater Prairie-Chicken *Tympanuchus cupido* – four near Thedford, Nebraska



Greater Prairie-Chicken



Greater Sage Grouse

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* – a few in Valentine NWR, adults with chicks in Seedskaadee NWR

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* – hundreds at AISP (including one leucistic individual)

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* – common in Bear River MBR

Clark's Grebe *Aechmophorus clarkia* – one pair with chicks in Bear River MBR, there were possibly more of this species but I didn't check all the grebes

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* – 100+ in Bear River MBR, small numbers in Yellowstone NP and Grand Teton NP

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* – about 200 in Bird River MBR, small numbers in Yellowstone NP (Hayden Valley) and Grand Teton NP (mainly Oxbow Bend, dam area and Willow Flats)

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* – about 4-5 in Bear River MBR, 3+ in Seedskaadee NWR, a few at Oxbow Bend

Great Egret *Ardea alba* – at least two in Bear River MBR

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* – 30+ in Bear River MBR

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* – 20+ at Bear River MBR

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* – about 200-300 at Bear River MBR, about 100 just outside AISP

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* – fairly common to common throughout

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* – four flying very low over the Walmart parking in Pocatello, the famous osprey nest in Lamar Valley was still occupied by the pair and (at least) one young and a few others seen in Lamar Valley, at least two in Seedskaadee NWR

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* – one or two on most days in Lamar Valley, two at the bison carcass in Hayden Valley, one adult in Badlands NP at the Roberts Prairiedog Town, an adult near Greybull (Wyoming), an adult near Wapiti (Wyoming), at least three in Seedskaadee NWR

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius* – five in Bear River MBR, usually 1-3 in Lamar and Hayden Valley, 2-4 in Badlands NP/Conata Basin/Sage Creek Rim Road

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* – adult on the Hell Canyon trail, a juvenile at AISP, an adult on route near the Wyoming/Idaho border near Bear Lake
 Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* – one at Smokey River Campsite and one on the Striped Rock Loop trail in COR, one near Fort Collins, one in Valentine NWR
 Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* – fairly common to common throughout the tour
 Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* – fairly common in Idaho, Utah and Colorado, less common but still regular sightings in the other states, two of the Krider colour morph were seen
 Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis* – fairly common in the Black Hills/Custer SP/Wind Cave NP, Badlands NP, a few along the Sundance-Newcastle road



Ferruginous Hawk



Dusky Grouse

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* – an adult at Beartooth Pass, an immature at Flaming Gorge NRA, at least three in Seedskafee NWR, an adult and an immature in Dinosaur NM on the Sounds of Silence trail, one on route near Rawlins, one in a prairie town in Conata Basin
 American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* – 1-4 seen almost daily
 Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – one in Bear River MBR
 Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus* – one flew past us at extremely close range (<10 m) at Mount Washburn, one at Devil's Tower, three sightings in Badlands NP, one in Pawnee NG, brief view on the Wind Cave Canyon trail
 American Coot *Fulica Americana* – common in Bear River MBR, also seen in Seedskafee NWR
 Sandhill Crane *Antigone Canadensis* – a group of about 100 just outside Bear River MBR on August 25, small numbers present (usually between 2 and 8) in Lamar and Hayden Valley, a handful of sightings in Grand Teton NP, a group at least 80 birds roosting on sandbanks in the Green River in Dinosaur NM, a pair near the Wyoming/Idaho border near Bear Lake
 Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* – several tens at Bear River
 American Avocet *Recurvirostra Americana* – 1000+ at AISP, several tens at Bear River
 Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous* – fairly common in Bear River MBR, several at AISP, two along Sage Creek Rim Road (Badlands NP), 4+ in Valentine NWR, 4+ in Seedskafee NWR
 Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus* – three at AISP
 Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* – one in flight in Bear River MBR
 Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* – one in Bear River MBR, one in Seedskafee NWR
 Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* – (at least) one in Seedskafee NWR
 Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* – at least four in Bear River MBR
 Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* – common in Bear River MBR, fairly common on the Flaming Gorge reservoir, several in Seedskafee NWR, a few seen near Fort Collins; quite a lot of gulls were seen on route, but I did not stop for them (e.g., Bear Lake, North Platte, lakes/rivers on route between Fort Collins and Rock Springs), so gull sightings are heavily underrecorded in this report
 Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* – common in Bear River MBR, small groups at Yellowstone Lake in Yellowstone NP

California Gull *Larus californicus* – several in Bear River MBR
 Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* – 30+ at Bear River MBR
 Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* – one at Bear River MBR
 Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – the ones in COR and Dinosaur NM appeared to be wild
 Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* – fairly common around Fort Collins and Pawnee NG,
 Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* – seen throughout the tour, common in Badlands NP, Dinosaur
 NM, Pawnee NG, Valentine NWR, on route in Nebraska
 Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* – inconspicuous and a little shy (compared to birds seen in Brazil):
 at least one in Conata Basin and three in the Roberts Prairiedog town



Burrowing Owl

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* – one seen in the late afternoon at Valentine NWR
 Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* – one flying past at dusk in Valentine NWR
 Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* – (at least) one at Schwabacher's Landing and one near Fork
 Creek Ranch in Grand Teton NP, one in Valentine NWR, one near White River in Nebraska, one at the
 Crow Valley campground in Pawnee NG
 Common Poorwill *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii* – one seen well in COR
 White-throated Swift *Aeronautes saxatalis* – a few around Devils Tower
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus* – several seen at the feeders at COR HQ
 Calliope Hummingbird *Selasphorus calliope* – several seen at the feeders at COR HQ
 Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon* – two at a pond in Malta (Idaho), one at Lost Lake and one in
 Lamar Valley, two in Valentine NWR
 Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* – an adult and juvenile in DTNM, an adult in
 White River, Nebraska, a subadult on the Hell Canyon Trail in the Black Hills, an adult on the Conata
 Basin Road just at the national park border, an adult on the Sage Creek Road (the section of the road
 outside the national park in northern direction towards Wall) and a subadult in Valentine NWR
 Williamson's Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus thyroideus* – a female on the Hellroaring trail in Yellowstone NP
 and a male on the Lost Lake Trail in Yellowstone NP
 Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis* – one male on Aspen Nature Trail,
 Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens* – a female on the North Fork Creek trail in COR, a female in
 Valentine NWR
 Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* – one pair on the Circle Creek Overlook trail in COR one at the
 Crow Valley campground in Pawnee NG, a male on the Hell Canyon trail in Black Hills, one at Four
 Mile Draw in Custer SP(check photo), one at Desert Voices trail in Dinosaur NM

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* – by far the commonest woodpecker on the trip, seen in practically every reserve visited

Western Wood-pewee *Contopus sordidulus* – one on the North Fork trail in COR, one on the Wind Cave Canyon trail

[Willow flycatcher *Empidonax traillii* – a possible sighting in Valentine NWR]

[Hammond's flycatcher *Empidonax hammondii* – a possible sighting in Antelope Island SP]

Gray Flycatcher *Empidonax wrightii* – (at least) one in COR, responded to playback

Cordilleran Flycatcher *Empidonax occidentalis* – several seen were probably this species because they were the only breeding or most common *Empidonax* flycatcher in the area

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* – about 2-3 daily in Badlands NP, fairly common in Dinosaur NM (1-2 on each hike)

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* – one in Pawnee NG, one on Sage Creek Rim road just outside the Badlands national park, one at Schwabacher's Landing in Grand Teton NP

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* – one in Bear River MBTR, (at least) four in Fort Niobrara NWR, 5+ in Valentine NWR

Plumbeous Vireo *Vireo plumbeus* – one in the canyon section of the Hell Canyon trail, two in Dinosaur NM

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus* – at least three on various trails in COR, at least two in the canyon section of the Hell Canyon trail

Gray Jay *Perisoreus Canadensis* – about 2-3 at LeHardy rapids, two on Mount Washburn and two at Sheepeater Cliffs in Yellowstone NP, two on the Twin Ocean Lake trail and one on String Lake trail in Grand Teton NP

Pinyon Jay *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus* – one in Dinosaur NM, a probable one in Flaming Gorge

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri* – a few at Dunraven Pass, a few seen on hikes in Grand Teton NP,

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata* – three in White River (Nebraska), at least four at Crow Valley campground in Pawnee NG

Western Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma woodhouseii* – two on the Circle Creek Overlook trail, two at the start of the Desert Voices trail in Dinosaur NM

Clark's Nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana* – common to very common in Yellowstone NP, also common in COR, Grand Teton NP, and the Black Hills; one bird in Seedskafee NWR seemed a little out of place

Black-billed Magpie *Pica hudsonia* – locally common

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* – locally common but scarce or absent in many areas, fairly easy to see in the lower-lying areas on the tour (southeast Idaho, Nebraska, northeast Colorado)

Common Raven *Corvus corax* – very common in Yellowstone NP and Grand Teton NP and the higher/mountainous parts of Wyoming, Colorado, etc. Scarce to absent in lower lying areas.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* – several in COR, common in Pawnee NG, also seen in Valentine NWR, Seedskafee NWR, Badlands NP

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* – 100+ in Bear River MBR

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* – a few migrating south near the southern Yellowstone NP entrance

Cliff swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* – only a few sightings (several on route and Bear River MBR)

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – common, seen throughout

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapilla* – two on Creek Towers Trail in COR, four at Devil's Tower NM, two on the Hell Canyon trail in the Black Hills, 5+ in Wind Cave NP (Wind Cave Canyon trail), heard in Fort Niobrara,

Mountain Chickadee *Poecile gambeli* – one Circle Creek Overlook Trail in COR, one on the Twin Ocean Lake trail, a few on the Death Canyon, String Lake and Moose Ponds trails in Grand Teton NP

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis* – five on the Hell Canyon Trail in the Black Hills, at least two on the Wind Cave Canyon trail

Pygmy Nuthatch *Sitta pygmaea* – one on the Beartooth Highway

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta Canadensis* – (fairly) common in COR, easy to see in forest areas in Yellowstone NP including Lost Lake and Trout Lake trails. Also seen on the Twin Ocean Lake, Death Canyon, String Lake and Moose Ponds trails in Grand Teton NP



Common Poorwill



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana* – one seen on the Red Beds trail on Devils Tower NM
[Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* – probably seen in Bear River MBR and Valentine NWR, better views needed]
Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus* – by far the commonest wren on the trip, seen in practically every nature reserve visited
House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* – a family group on the Moose Ponds trail in Grand Teton NP, two on Death Canyon trail in Grand Teton NP
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* – two on the Circle Creek Overlook trail, a nondescript small grayish long-tailed bird in not the greatest light was probably this species on the Wind Cave Canyon trail
American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus* – two along the river at Blackwater Creek Ranch (near Cody)
[Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa* – a possible sighting in Grand Teton NP, bird moved erratically in fast-moving flock]
Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* – one seen well on the Circle Creek Overlook trail in COR, several in a mixed flock on the Jenny Lake trail in Grand Teton NP, probably more were seen but often hard to tell in fast moving flocks high up in pine trees
Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* – 10+ birds at Duck Lake in Valentine NWR
Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* – locally common, seen in COR, Yellowstone NP, 20+ in Fossil Butte NM
Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* – on seen briefly at Hel Canyon Trail in the Black Hills, one seen well at Aspen Nature Trail
American Robin *Turdus migratorius* – common, seen throughout; remarkable were 500+ birds feeding on berries in Hell Canyon in the Black Hills
Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* – one in Valentine NWR
Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* – one (or possibly two) seen briefly but quite well about 4-5 times at Two Ocean Lake
Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum* – one near Badlands NP (on the Sage Creek Road to Scenic)
Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* – four seen on the road to Lynn southeast of COR
European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* – common in urban areas or around farms
Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* – one at Two Ocean Lake, about 3-4 on the Hell Canyon Trail in the Black Hills, two in Custer SP, four at Stewart Lake just south of Jensen (near Dinosaur NM)
American Pipit *Anthus rubescens* – at least two along the unpaved road to Lynn (southeast of COR)
[Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata* – a probable one in Grand Teton NP on the Jenny Lake Trail]

Virginia's Warbler *Oreothlypis virginiae* – two, of which one seen very well, in COR

MacGillivray's Warbler *Geothlypis tolmiei* – one slightly out of place in bushes in Pawnee NG

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* – two at Two Ocean Lake, one on the Wind Cave Canyon trail

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata* – fairly common in COR, Grand Teton NP and Yellowstone NP

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia* – one in Valentine NWR, one female at the Crow Valley campground in Pawnee NG

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla* – one pair on the Artist's Point trail in Yellowstone NP, one on the Death Canyon trail in Grand Teton NP, one male on the Sheep Creek Geological Loop (Flaming Gorge)

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* – fairly common in COR/Almo/Albion, Yellowstone NP, and Grand Teton NP; in the Black Hills they were already scarce and most seemed to have migrated south,

[Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus* – not seen/positively identified]

[McCown's Longspur *Rhynchophanes mccownii* – not seen/positively identified]

Green-tailed Towhee *Pipilo chlorurus* – fairly common in COR: several on the Circle Creek Overlook Trail, North Fork, Striped Rock Loop and Elephant Rock trails

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* – fairly common in COR and Wind Cave NP, also seen in Hell Canyon trail, Dinosaur NM, and Wind Cave NP

[Cassin's sparrow *Peucaea cassinii* – a rather drab-looking sparrow in Pawnee NG was possibly this species]

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerine* – common in COR, seen throughout the tour including Wind Cave NP, Custer SP, Black Hills, Devils Tower NM, Valentine NWR, Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP and Pawnee NG

Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri* – one seen well in COR (much more that were probably this species were flushed), a group seen well and photographed at Mormon Row in Grand Teton, several seen well in Dinosaur NM

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus* – common in COR and Pawnee NG, some of the grassland sparrows in Wind Cave NP also appeared to be this species but they would never stay long enough on wires or bushes to allow photos

Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca* – at least one in undergrowth at Two Ocean Lake and at least two at Oxbow River Bend; all were of the slate-coloured variety

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* – a few in non-breeding plumage in Pawnee NG and Conata Basin were probably this species based on the large amount of white on the wings in flight

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* – one (of a larger) group photographed in Bear River MBR positively identified by Birdforum members, a number of possible ones in Conata Basin, Seedskaadee NWR and Pawnee NG but they never stayed long enough in view for photos or scope viewing

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* – only about 4-5 sightings in total, positively identified in Dinosaur NM, Yellowstone NP and Grand Teton NP

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* – several along Beartooth Highway, two at Stewart Lake (near Dinosaur NM), one at our cabin in Silver Gate

Pink-sided Junco *Junco hyemalis* – fairly common to common in Grand Teton NP and Yellowstone NP, also seen in Valentine NWR

White-winged Junco *Junco hyemalis* – one seen well on the Hell Canyon trail (Black Hills), one at Devil's Tower NM

Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus* – two on the Wind Cave Canyon trail in Wind Cave NP

[Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna* – they should occur in western Nebraska but did not really bother to ID the meadowlarks in their worn plumage]

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta* – only a few sightings of single birds in Yellowstone NP, fairly scarce/inconspicuous in the grassland/sage brush areas of Grand Teton NP, common to

abundant in open areas in Custer SP, Wind Cave NP, Pawnee NG, Valentine and Fort Niobrara NWR and Nebraska in general

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* – common to very common in Bear River MBR, Valentine NWR and Seedskaelee NWR, also seen on route

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* – common to very common in Bear River MBR, Seedskaelee NWR and Valentine NWR, regular sightings on route in Nebraska and Colorado

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* – fairly common throughout

Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus* – common to very common in the higher parts of Wyoming, easy to see in Yellowstone NP, Grand Teton NP, Devils Tower NM and the Black Hills

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* – seen in Devils Tower NM/Hulett and on route in Nebraska

Bullock's oriole *Icterus bullockii* – one juvenile/female type in the Crow Valley campground in Pawnee NG

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus* – one male in Dinosaur NM

Cassin's Finch *Haemorhous cassinii* – one male and several female/juvenile type birds seen well on Mt Washburn (we probably saw more in Grand Teton NP and Yellowstone NP, but I didn't bother because it would have required to set up a scope to ID positively)

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus* – seen a few times on trails in Yellowstone NP, fairly regular at picnic sites in Yellowstone NP, common around our cabin in Silver Gate, scattered sightings in Grand Teton NP

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis* – about 6-7 on the Hell Canyon trail in the Black Hills, one male seen well at Stewart Lake (which is south of Jensen opposite the Dinosaur NM entrance road in Utah)

Evening grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus* – four in Mammoth Springs, the male still had a half-decent breeding plumage

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – common in urban areas



Clark's Nutcracker

Williamson's Sapsucker



Prairie Rattlesnake

OTHER WILDLIFE

Although a little late in the season, butterfly activity was still pretty good. I didn't have a field guide for them but some pretty spectacular species were seen.

The Sockeye/Kokanee Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) on the Sheep Creek Geological Trail were pretty cool too. These reptiles could be positively identified:

Prairie Rattlesnake *Crotalus viridis* – one at the Roberts Prairiedog Town and one on Sage Creek Road in Badlands NP, a possible one in Dinosaur NM

Bullsnake aka Gopher Snake *Pituophis catenifer* – one on the Sounds of Silence trail in Dinosaur NM, a gorgeous looking snake

Wandering Garter Snake *Thamnophis elegans vagrans* – one on the Moose Ponds trail in Grand Teton NP

Common Sagebrush Lizard *Sceloporus graciosus* – common in Dinosaur NM

Plateau Lizard *Sceloporus tristichus* – fairly common in Dinosaur NM



Grand Prismatic Spring