

COLORADO 6th – 12th APRIL 2017

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INTRODUCTION

I first visited Colorado in 1994 on a grouse and prairie-chicken chase and had a great trip. Twenty three years on I decided to return on my way home from Baja California and while it was primarily a short trip for a few birds I still needed, I also managed to see 18 species of mammal plus a further two dead on the road, without making too much effort (with one exception) or doing any spotlighting

Although the primary targets were Dusky Grouse, Gunnison Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker all of which were seen well the highlight of the trip was the American Marten seen at Moose Visitor Centre near Gould after a three and a half hour stakeout at the feeders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ITINERARY

- 6th** Late afternoon arrival in Denver and long delay picking up rental car before heading to Littleton and arranging the loan of a pair of binoculars before continuing on a two-hour drive to Salida for the night.
- 7th** Morning Monarch Pass & recce to Waunita Springs. Afternoon & evening around Gunnison. Night Gunnison.
- 8th** Waunita Springs Gunnison Grouse lek from 0530-0800 then headed back to Gunnison. Middle of day driving from Gunnison to Montrose with several short stops on route. Late afternoon & evening in Black Canyon of Gunnison with awesome views of displaying Dusky Grouse. Night Montrose.
- 9th** Morning drive to Mack near the Utah border unsuccessfully searching for Sagebrush Sparrow before driving NE to Steamboat Springs for the night.
- 10th** Unsuccessful dawn visit to Sharp-tailed Grouse lek & then headed north to Walden. Mid-afternoon to dusk around feeders at Moose Visitor Centre near Gould, eventually striking lucky with American Marten, plus Striped Skunk & Moose on the drive back to Walden for the night.
- 11th** Pre-dawn at the Greater Sage Grouse lek south-west of Walden, absolutely spectacular. Post-breakfast visits to Walden Lake & Windy Gap Reservoir before heading to Silverthorne where I spent the afternoon birding. A short stop at Georgetown on route back to Denver failed to produce any Rocky Bighorn Sheep. Night Denver.
- 12th** Early morning birding at Harriman Lake in Denver before heading to airport for flight home.

BRIEF SITE NOTES

Black Canyon of Gunnison – a stakeout for Dusky Grouse but with a good variety of mammals present as well. I concentrated on the grouse but other trip reports on www.cloudbirders.com report various squirrels and chipmunks among other things. The turn off is north of the Montrose-Gunnison road about 8 miles east of Gunnison on SW Colorado.

Moose Visitor Centre, Gould – Just west of Cameron Pass on the road from Fort Collins to Walden in northern Colorado the centre has several feeders which attract a wide range of birds and several species of mammal including while I was there an American Marten that came in at 6 pm after the visitor centre itself had closed. You can still view the feeders after the centre closes & I suspect that late evening stakeouts could produce other good mammals. I saw Least Chipmunk & Montane Vole during the afternoon. I also saw Striped Skunk and four Moose along the road on the drive back to Walden 20 miles north of Gould. Wyoming Ground Squirrel is common particularly in the area between Walden & Coalmont to the SW & I also saw Pronghorn in this area and White-tailed Prairie-Dogs 20 miles further south along the road towards Steamboat Springs.

MAMMALS

Desert Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	5+ NW of Mack.
Mountain Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>	One east of Hayden.
Montane Vole	<i>Microtus montanus</i>	One Moose Visitor Centre, Gould
White-tailed Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys leucurus</i>	Common NW of Mack. 10+ 25 miles south-west of Walden.
Gunnison's Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>	3+ north of Montrose.
Black-tailed Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Three near junction of highways 285 and 121 in Denver,
Yellow-bellied Marmot	<i>Marmota flaviventris</i>	One at roadside 30 miles west of Gunnison.
Wyoming Ground Squirrel	<i>Urocitellus elegans</i>	Common around Walden.
Rock Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegatus</i>	One Black Canyon of Gunnison.
Least Chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>	2+ Moose Visitor Centre, Gould. One 8 miles north of Silverthorne.
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	One 15 miles east of Gunnison.
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	One dead on road NW of Mack.

Striped Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	One 3 miles north of Gould.
American Marten	<i>Martes Americana</i>	One at feeders at Moose Visitor Centre Gould.
American Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	One dead on road south of Grand Junction.
Moose	<i>Alces americanus</i>	Four, five miles north of Gould.
American Elk	<i>Cervus Canadensis</i>	300+ Jefferson Heights. 20 Waunita Springs, 15+ along CO27 SE of Hayden and 15 12 miles north of Silverthorne.
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Common between Waunita Springs and Gunnison. Five Black Canyon of Gunnison.
White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	c.10 near Salida.
Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra Americana</i>	Four along CO27 SE of Hayden, three 25 miles south of Walden and c.10 12 miles south of Walden.

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	Three Windy Gap Reservoir.
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	A close perched bird in Black Canyon of Gunnison.
Greater Sage-Grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	50+ lekking at close range south-west of Walden. Just as good as they were 23 years ago and one of the best sights in birding.
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	<i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	Four males and four females lekking distantly at Waunita Springs with another seven flying over.
Dusky Grouse	<i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>	An absolutely superb male displaying close to the car in Black Canyon of Gunnison.
Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Two Black Canyon of Gunnison.
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	One Waunita Springs, two east & five west of Hayden, two CO27 SE of Hayden & two between Walden & Gould.
American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	Four Walden Lake.
American Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides dorsalis</i>	One Monarch Pass.
Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	3+ Silverthorne.
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	Male plus two females Silverthorne.