

Colorado & Florida Trip Reports
December 2023 & January 2024

Colorado	Florida
American Bison	Common Bottlenose Dolphin
Bighorn Sheep	Eastern Cottontail
Black-tailed Prairie Dog	Eastern Gray Squirrel
Coyote	Marsh Rabbit
Moose	Northern Raccoon
Mule Deer	Virginia Possum
Pronghorn	West Indian Manatee
White-tailed Deer	

(Lifers in bold)

For the sake of brevity, I combined two small trip reports over the last month and a half. Highlights include:

- Checking off my goal of 50 new species in 2023 with the Bighorn Sheep outside of Georgetown, Colorado on the way to the airport. With the expert driving skills of my girlfriend, Haleigh, we hit the brakes and pulled into the shoulder of the interstate for a couple of quick photographs. Wonder what the semi-truck drivers were thinking when they saw me pop out of the car?
- Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge just outside of Denver was pretty neat. Good mammals and conservation success on the outskirts of a major city. This is where we found the Black-tailed Prairie Dogs. They've also re-introduced Black-footed Ferrets to the refuge. We missed out on the ferrets with the timing of our visit, but would certainly go back again.
- Inside Rocky Mountain NP, we had the chance to observe two moose propagate the future moose population of the park.
- Haleigh and I spent a long weekend in Fort Myers, Florida to get out of the cold and I had the goal of checking out Manatees and Common Bottlenose Dolphins. First stop was "Manatee Park" outside Ft. Myers. It's a popular wintertime hangout thanks to the local power plant pumping excess hot water into the local water. Everywhere you looked, there were manatees. Easy enough. After three separate dolphin-watching rides cancellations, we found a captain to take us out. As fate would have it, we struck out on the dolphins, but did see manatees, alligators, and a variety of birds. To cope with not seeing the dolphins, we headed down to Margaritaville to ease the pain. While we walked down the beach, my prayers were answered and we saw a dolphin swimming along the coast right before the sunset. A perfect ending to the weekend. (The glare from the sunset and limited visibility in the water makes it a little harder to be definitive. Don't think there are many other options considering the location and proximity.)



