

YELLOWSTONE & GRAND TETON

14th – 27th June 2008

Tour leaders

Greg Smith

Mike Read

Daily Diary

Saturday 14th June

The flight from Heathrow left a few minutes late but went very smoothly and arrived a little ahead of schedule. Once we had cleared US immigration, we strolled to our next departure gate and waited for the onward flight to Billings. We boarded the plane and seemed set to depart when a thunderstorm rolled in and it became very windy. This delayed us for a while and we eventually landed at Billings nearly an hour late. It was a little before midnight when we arrived at the motel for a well earned nights sleep.

Sunday 15th June

We began the day in a relaxed style and left the motel at 9a.m. and, with our local guide, Helen Carlson, headed up on to the plateau overlooking Billings. At least 6 Cliff Swallows and a Black-billed Magpie were first on to the list quickly followed by at least 4 White-throated Swifts, an American Robin and a Bullock's Oriole. Mourning Dove, Barn Swallow and Desert Cottontail could be seen below us and in the distance groups of American White Pelicans (totalling perhaps 40 birds) were rising up on thermals close to a tall cliff. As we moved on we added a Northern Flicker perched on a tree, a Brown Thrasher perched on a bush and an American Kestrel that flew past.

Our next port of call was Lake Elmo where a Say's Phoebe flew across the road. There were about 10 Western Grebes and 4 Redheads on the water and a few more American Robins in the bushes and on the lawns. Warbling Vireo and Eastern Blue Jay were heard, Red-winged Blackbird and a Common Nighthawk were seen and as we drove away from the area, a Western Kingbird landed on a post.

At Two Moons Park birds seemed to be everywhere as we strolled some narrow trails through part of this lovely Town Park. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Yellow Warbler were our first finds along with a group of about 10 Cedar Waxwings, a Gray Catbird, an American Redstart and another 9 White Pelicans. And this was before we left the car park! A few more American Redstarts and Yellow Warblers were added soon afterwards and a Song Sparrow gave tantalising glimpses before we saw one of the many Yellow-breasted Chats that we had heard singing. Red-eyed Vireo, Common Pheasant and Belted Kingfisher were seen and Common Yellowthroat and Black-capped Chickadee were heard before we added another mammal to the list, an American Red Squirrel. We completed our visit here with 2 more Common Nighthawks flying around, a House Wren nesting in an old woodpecker's nest site, Great Blue Heron and Spotted Sandpiper beside the river and a passing Osprey.

After lunch we headed for River Front Park where we were again seeing new species as we arrived. The many people there were feeding lots of Canada Geese and Mallards while Barn swallows hawking for insects were joined by Bank Swallows (the equivalent of our Sand Martins) and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. At a small lake, Red-winged and Yellow-

headed Blackbirds were nesting in the cattails and 3 Painted Turtles were sunning themselves on a log. Other birds noted here included a male Black-headed Grosbeak, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, a few more Yellow Warblers and a Red-tailed Hawk. As we neared the vehicles to move to another part of the park, a Hairy Woodpecker flew past. At some other more open ponds, Tree Swallows were nesting in nest boxes, a couple of Spotted Sandpipers were on the banks and a Killdeer was seen on a small island. Just before we left, a female Black-headed Grosbeak was seen in a tall tree whilst a male Lazuli Bunting, first found by its song, was eventually seen by everyone.

From here, we drove through Billings to Helen Carlson's home where we were given a conducted tour and then looked at the birds in her garden. A pair of Black-capped Chickadees was frequently visiting the feeders and there were a few American Robins including a juvenile. A House Finch sang from the surrounding trees but was not seen and another Downy Woodpecker flew past. Just before we left, Helen's local Wild Turkey arrived with her 9 remaining youngsters (Helen said there were originally 12) and gave us good views of our final 'new' species for the day.

After a time to relax, we headed to 'downtown' Billings for a fine dinner before returning to our rooms for an early night. Yesterday's long day had caught up with just about everyone!

Monday 16th June

Today we were going to head out on to the prairies with our local guide Helen Carlson and when we picked her up just after 8a.m. the Wild Turkey family could be seen just a couple of doors from her home. Black-capped Chickadees and a Yellow Warbler were in her garden and as we headed out of the suburbs, American Robins were frequent. We topped the ridge and began heading east and as we went there were occasional Western Meadowlarks and one or two American Kestrels to be seen. A group of half a dozen Pronghorns were grazing beside the road and offered good views once we had stopped.

We left the main route at Acton to overlook some shallow pools and immediately were adding new species. Waders here were Killdeer, American Avocet, lots of active Wilson's Phalaropes and an Upland Sandpiper while ducks included Mallard, Northern Pintail and a couple of Blue-winged Teals. Various pools along the route to Broadview were scanned and we were able to add many more species including American Coots, Sora Rail (heard), Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds and more American Avocets. Raptors seen along the way were American Kestrel and a couple of Ferruginous Hawks while smaller birds included Cedar Waxwing, Eastern and Western Kingbird. At Broadview we saw a passing Swainson's Hawk and just beyond this small town we paused at a pool where a few Willets, Wilson's Phalaropes, and American Avocets were feeding close to lone Black-necked Stilts and Marbled Godwit.

A short drive took us to a place where we could overlook the main part of Broadview Pond and here birds were abundant. At times it was difficult to keep up with what was being seen! Water birds included most of the duck species we had already seen as well as Redheads, Canvasback, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks, and a female Hooded Merganser, Eared (Black-necked) and Pied-billed Grebes and American Coots. Waders included Stilts, Avocets and Wilson's Phalaropes as well as a couple of White-faced Ibises. 2 California Gulls stood on a peninsula along with a few Great Blue Herons, 2 Black Terns perched on posts and then went hawking for insects low over the water while 5 Common Nighthawks fed higher above us. Other species noted included Barn, Bank and Cliff Swallow and many noisy Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

We returned to Broadview and then took the road towards Molt. At a particular location we paused to search an area of sparse grassland and here we added both Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs to the list (the latter was most difficult to find and see!) while there

seemed to be Horned Larks everywhere, a trend that continued throughout the day. A couple of Northern Harriers passed by as did a similar number of Ferruginous Hawks and Western Meadowlarks sang frequently. As we headed on towards Molt there were occasional Vesper Sparrows and Lark Buntings to be seen along with a few more Pronghorns. From Molt we took the Rapelje road and saw a few more Chestnut-collared Longspurs along the way as well as a lone Mule Deer. Black-tailed Prairie Dog towns were everywhere; some seemed to be huge cities! Northern Harriers were fairly frequent and there were occasional Red-tailed Hawks and we also found a Golden Eagle perched on a roadside telegraph pole. This bird allowed a fairly close approach and as we headed on towards a late lunch, saw two more Golden Eagles beside a pond and then two more on telegraph poles.

After lunch in Rapelje, where we saw Eastern Kingbird and a couple of Lark Sparrows, we began a different route back towards Molt. A pair of Grey Partridges was seen by the people in the leading minibus and everyone was seeing large numbers of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs again. Two more Golden Eagles (or probably the same individuals as the outward journey) were seen and right on the roadside was a pair of Upland Sandpipers and 2 Long-Billed Curlews were in some grassland. Whenever we were near meadows with cattle, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Brewers Blackbirds were found to be in attendance. At one particular Prairie Dog town we made efforts to search for burrowing owls but without success. The ready supply of 'food' was highlighted by the fact that there were 2 Golden Eagles, a Ferruginous Hawk and a Great Blue Heron in the area as well as occasional passing Northern Harriers. From here we completed the journey to Molt, seeing more Lark Buntings, Chestnut-collared Longspurs and Horned Larks as we went.

Back on tarred roads now we soon completed the journey back to Billings and after a while to freshen up, we headed out for another fine evening meal.

Tuesday 17th June

Today we were moving to Cooke City and we left Billings and headed westwards along the interstate highway. Few birds were seen as we sped through the first part of the journey but soon after we joined the road towards Red Lodge, things became more interesting. A family group of Sandhill Cranes were feeding in a field and an Osprey was sitting on a tree beside a river. Red-winged Blackbirds were frequent along the roadside ditches and a kettle of 5 Turkey Vultures rose up on a thermal. Three more Sandhill Cranes were seen before we made a stop at a rest area and the birding here was quite productive. Species seen included American Robins, Common Grackles, Cedar Waxwings, Western Wood Pewee, House Finch, American Goldfinch and a Hairy Woodpecker.

At Red Lodge we visited a garden where we were pleasantly surprised to see a good quantity of Black-crowned Rosy Finches. There were perhaps 80 birds present overall. A Pine Siskin visited the feeders briefly and overhead we saw passing Great Blue Heron, Sandhill Crane and a few Tree Swallows. After collecting our picnic lunches, we drove up to the Parkside Campground where picnic tables in the shade seemed to be the preferred choice as it was so warm. During lunch and the short walk afterwards we encountered Plumbeous Vireo, Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Chipping Sparrow and an American Dipper.

Heading onwards we climbed up towards the Beartooth Pass and paused at a viewpoint above the sharpest set of hairpin bends we encountered on this route. From here the scenery was great. Wildlife was also encountered and this included 3 Mountain Bluebirds, 4 Red Crossbills, Common Raven, Townsend's Solitaire and a Clark's Nutcracker. Mammals were also here including a confident Least Chipmunk and a very elusive American Marten that was only glimpsed by a couple of members of the group. We completed the climb on up to the pass and were pleased to be able to make the journey (the pass had only been opened the previous day!) along a roadway cleared through the huge amounts of snow. At times the

roadside snowdrifts were towering a dozen feet or more beside us! However, even at this high elevation we were seeing our first American Pipits searching for food beside the shallower patches of snow. Everyone agreed the views were quite simply stunning.

As we began our descent towards Cooke City, a pullout was home to a group of at least 4 Yellow-bellied Marmots and there were a few White-crowned Sparrows to be seen too. As we headed onwards we made occasional stops for photography or wildlife and we completed the journey with some time to spare before dinner just across the street from our motel.

Wednesday 18th June

After an early breakfast close to our motel, we headed off into the Lamar Valley part of Yellowstone National Park where we found plenty of wildlife. A female Mountain Goat and well-grown youngster were on the Barronette Peak cliffs and as we watched these, 2 Gray Jays were seen in the pines. At a stop a little further along there were a couple of Steller's Jays and a few Dark-eyed Juncos while a Ruby-crowned Kinglet sang nearby. As the conifers gave way to a more open grassland habitat, we saw some Bison, the first of many that day as well as some Elk, Pronghorns and a Coyote that seemed to be hunting some of the numerous Richardson's Ground Squirrels. Far out across the valley we were excited to find our first Gray Wolves, a group of 10 that were feeding on a previous day's Bison kill. We watched these members of the Druid Peak pack for some time before venturing further along the valley where a search soon had us looking at another smaller group (7 or 8 individuals) of Gray Wolves again feeding on a long-dead Elk carcass. As we watched a couple of Black Bears were seen amongst the fallen timbers of a distant hillside woodland but these were really difficult to observe. Then a closer and more openly observed female and year-old cub Grizzly Bear were seen walking across a grassy slope. Also seen along this part of the valley were an Osprey, a distant Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawks and a few Brewer's Sparrows.

We then moved beyond the Lamar Canyon and found 3 Pronghorns close to the road. We spent some time observing and photographing these and in the meantime located a single Black Bear and then a female with 2 cubs. At a comfort stop close to the Yellowstone Valley a couple of Ravens were seen at close quarters and a Hammond's Flycatcher was in one of the trees. We then looked down on the Yellowstone River and found a couple of Goosanders/Common Mergansers on rocks and a male Harlequin Duck was on the bank. A Cassin's Finch was seen in the pines as 2 Red-tailed Hawks circled overhead. There was also a Spotted Sandpiper (to add to the ones we had seen earlier along the Lamar River) and a couple of Tree Swallows were flying around.

We drove on to Tower Junction and a line of cars suggested 'bear'. It turned out to be another two Black Bears on the roadside but by the time we reached the spot, a ranger had arrived and ensured the traffic kept moving along this narrow, winding part of the highway. At the Blacktail pull off we looked over a pond where we located Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, American Coots, Ruddy Ducks and numerous Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

What a morning we had enjoyed. Nine Black and 2 Grizzly Bears, 2 Wolf packs and so much more besides. Time for a well-deserved lunch in Mammoth! Afterwards we were able to explore the terraced hot springs and the shopping facilities for a while before making our way back along the same route towards Cooke City. Approaching Tower Junction a Yellow-bellied Marmot seemed almost intent on committing suicide as it ran out into the road in front of numerous cars. Luckily it had a change of heart and dashed back to where it had come from. Stops along the Lamar Valley had us spending time looking at more Red-tailed Hawks, Pronghorn antelopes, Bison, Elk and Mule Deer but there was no sign of the bears or wolves we had seen on the outward journey. Mountain Bluebirds and Western Tanager were added during a walk at Pebble Creek campground and a few other species were seen as we headed back to Cooke City for a rest before dinner in a restaurant just across the road.

Thursday 19th June

We began the day with breakfast at Silver Gate where we saw a Pine Siskin, 3 Chipping Sparrows, a few Violet-green Swallows and American Robins. We then headed into the National Park and were soon watching a Black Bear close to the Lamar River. American Robins were frequent and a Black-billed Magpie was also noted. As we left the forest behind, we began to see more Bison, Elk and Pronghorns but generally birds were scarce. Having said that, the mammals certainly made up for the lack of birds and we did see the Sage Thrasher singing from the same bush as yesterday. There were also flying Ravens and Red-tailed Hawks to be seen.

At the Yellowstone pullout area we saw a male Bighorn Sheep at the same spot as the previous day and in the car park we also re-found the Hammond's Flycatcher. Whilst watching the Bighorn Sheep, a female Mountain Bluebird flew into its nest hole in a dead tree and 3 Clark's Nutcrackers flew over as did 2 Red-tailed Hawks. We then moved on to visit the spectacular Tower Falls. Unfortunately due to washouts, the lower trail to the foot of the falls was closed but we did gain really good views from above. A couple of members of the group were lucky enough to see a Northern Goshawk fly past while most of the group saw a group of 3 Red-tailed Hawks. In the nearby valley an Osprey was stood on its cliff-side nest and a male Western Tanager paid us a fleeting visit.

As we made the drive towards Canyon for lunch another Black Bear was seen in a small valley woodland but was in such an awkward place that it was impossible to stop. After lunch we continued our journey to Lake and driving through the forest we saw virtually nothing. As we reached the Yellowstone River things changed as we began to see Goosanders (Common Mergansers), White Pelicans, Canada Geese and American Wigeon along the way. When we reached the more open areas of the Hayden Valley, American Bison were much in evidence along with a few distant Elk. At a pullout where we could overlook a shallows area in the river we could see numerous wildfowl. These included Buffleheads, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Canada Geese, Goosanders, Mallard and American Wigeon.

On arrival at our cabins at Lake, we heard a commotion from the local American Robins in the pines nearby. There was a Swainson's Hawk robbing a Robin's nest of its young and the Robins were joined by at least one other pair plus a Red-breasted Nuthatch and a few other birds. Once we had settled into our cabins, we took a brief walk by the lake shore and around the cabins. On the vast expanse of water (close inshore thankfully!) were a Clark's Grebe, some Goosanders and a California Gull. In the trees we heard a Ruby-crowned Kinglet singing and the American Robins were looking somewhat dejected. A Mountain Chickadee was singing occasionally in the trees, a pair of Mountain Bluebirds was around the cabins and a Brewer's Sparrow in the scrub nearby completed wildlife watching for the day.

Friday 20th June

We began the day with a 6a.m. drive to the Hayden Valley where the sunrise was back-lighting mist rising from the Yellowstone River. The temperature was on the chilly side of cool (there was a frost!) but the variety of wildlife we found warmed us up somewhat. Bison, Elk and at least 3 Coyotes were seen but the best mammals had to be the sow and 2+ year-old cub Grizzly Bears. Mum even joined in the fun when the cub had to run to catch up. Fabulous! Whilst we were watching these antics, our first Bald Eagle was seen sitting on the top of a coniferous tree. Also noted along here were Goosanders, White Pelican and Great Blue Heron. At Fishing Bridge we found White-crowned Sparrows and Barrow's Goldeneye. Along the drive towards Gull Point we added Greater Scaup, at least 5 Spotted Sandpipers, a Double-crested Cormorant, Buffleheads, 2 Green-winged Teal and a Douglas's Squirrel (Chickaree). And all this before breakfast!

Before setting off for the day, we added Mountain Chickadee and Violet (not Violent as some were suggesting!)-green Swallows and another group of American White Pelicans. We then drove to Old Faithful and spent some time exploring and enjoying the various thermal features as well as the few birds around this fascinating area. These included more Cassin's Finches, Violet-green Swallows and White-crowned Sparrows. Some of the group even ventured into the gift shops. Had we allowed them too much time here?!!

We then headed out to a quieter spot near the Firehole thermal features for our picnic lunch. In the woodland here we found 3 Western Tanagers, Hairy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Juncos, Gray Jays and American Robins amongst the trees while the nearby pool and marsh held American Coot and Bufflehead. We then visited the Firehole Spring thermal pools and the Firehole Canyon for photos and wildlife. At the latter location there was a Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk and an Osprey's nest. We completed our day out by stopping at Gibbon Falls after which we returned to Lake Village in good time for another fine evening meal.

Saturday 21st June

We again visited the Hayden Valley before breakfast where Elk and Bison were very much in evidence. Canada Geese, Lesser Scaup and Goosanders swam on the Yellowstone River and beyond the far bank a female Grizzly Bear and her cub (presumably the same individuals as the previous day) wandered along feeding. After some time photographing Glacier Lilies, we drove to Fishing Bridge where the best bird was a Belted Kingfisher. From the bay a mile or so further along the road, the views across scattered island pines to the snow-capped mountains beyond was stunning. An Elk and young calf were in the wooded meadow across the road but in and around the bay itself there were plenty of birds to be seen. These included Buffleheads, Green-winged Teal, Clark's Grebes, both species of Scaup as well as Lincoln's and Savannah Sparrows and at least 4 Ospreys.

Cases packed and loaded, after breakfast we began the journey towards Grand Teton National Park. Our first stop was at the West Thumb Geyser Basin. Out on the Yellowstone Lake a Western Grebe and a few Barrow's Goldeneyes were among the birds seen. In the distance 2 more Ospreys were circling over some conifers and around the car park area were White-crowned Sparrows and a couple of Gray Jays. But of course the main feature here were the various thermal features including some beautifully coloured pools. Beside many of the hot water rivulets, Monkey Flower was blooming in profusion.

After a brief stop a little further on, we drove south out of Yellowstone and into the Grand Teton National Park to have lunch beside Jackson Lake with a view to the fabulous Teton range of mountains. Canada Geese and Western Grebes were somewhat far out on the lake and there were a few American White Pelicans flying past. In the trees surrounding the picnic area were Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Tanager, Mountain Chickadee, Hairy Woodpecker, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers while the ground was carpeted with bright yellow Arnica flowers. From here we drove to the Colter Bay complex and after a short wait we were able to check in to our cabins for a brief rest before setting off for our evening river trip. We assembled at Jackson Lake Lodge and enjoyed the magnificent views from their lounge. At 6.30 p.m. we boarded the bus to the launch area and in the very warm weather we sought the shade to eat our barbecue meal. After a safety briefing we boarded the inflatable dinghies for a most enjoyable 10 mile river trip.

Due to the high river flow we were carried along at a good speed and were soon seeing the first of many Elk and Spotted Sandpipers. Many more Elk were seen and throughout the journey we had the lovely backdrop of the Teton Mountains. A couple of Ospreys flew past and some distance into our journey we saw a young Bald Eagle sitting on a nest but unfortunately there was no sign of the adults. There were a few Beaver lodges along the bank but it was some time before we actually saw one of the animals themselves. In the end we

actually saw four of them including fairly close views from each side of the boat. Our crew worked hard to keep us clear of the many obstacles and despite the high water levels, we did run aground at one point but this was soon rectified and we were on our way once more. At the landing the crew had to work hard again but we landed safely and boarded the bus to take us back to Jackson Lake Lodge. During the ride we saw more Pronghorns and Elk and at the Lodge, a group of Cedar Waxwings seemed to be coming in to roost in the bushes below the viewing area. On Willow Flats beneath the lodge, dozens of Elk were emerging from their daytime hiding and beginning to feed in the grassy areas. As we headed back to Colter Bay, the sun was setting beyond the mountains to end another great day.

Sunday 22nd June

We had a rather more relaxed start to the day with an 8 a.m. breakfast being the first meeting point. However, some of the group were up earlier and were seeking out the local wildlife. Species found included Chickaree (Douglas's Squirrel), Pine Siskin and, at long last, actual viewings of a species we had heard almost everywhere we went, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. After breakfast we drove to the nearby Pilgrim Creek pond where we had super views over a carpet of Lupines to the reflected mountains and beyond. A Green-tailed Towhee led us a merry dance but in the end, everyone managed to see the bird. A pair of Northern Flickers may well have been nesting in the area while Chipping Sparrows were frequent. Further along this dirt road we paused to view the Pilgrim Creek and here we glimpsed a MacGillivray's Warbler but it really did prove even more elusive than the towhee earlier. Overhead 3 Red-tailed Hawks circled and in the trees we saw a Dusky Flycatcher that provided some identification problems due to some non-typical plumage features. Also noted here were 3 Western Tanagers, Yellow Warbler, Pine Siskins and a Warbling Vireo.

Our next stop was at the Oxbow Bend where many photos were taken of the view towards the Tetons. Birds encountered here included Black-headed Grosbeak, Brewer's Blackbird and Great Blue Heron. At Pacific Creek we walked along the road beside the river and here we found many more species. A Sora called from the willow scrub where Red-winged Blackbirds were on territory. Another Black-headed Grosbeak was seen briefly and a Red-tailed Hawk flew past as we gazed down on a group of Cut-throat Trout. A juvenile Bald Eagle flew in and perched in a coniferous tree and in the various trees and scrub we found Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, Warbling Vireo and Olive-sided Flycatcher. However, the best two finds here were the male Ruffed Grouse that crossed the road and the Broad-tailed Hummingbird that perched fairly close to our vehicles.

We then drove to Signal Mountain Lodge for lunch and here we saw a good number of Cliff Swallows and a couple of Uinta Ground Squirrels. Afterwards we drove past the turning to Signal Mountain itself and took a dirt road across the sagebrush countryside. Birds were in short supply but we did encounter a few Brewer's Sparrows and a Bison on the way out. Beside the Snake River a Red-naped Sapsucker was found among the trees, an Osprey flew along searching for fish in the river below and a Spotted Sandpiper tail-wagged on one of the rocks. Mourning Dove and Gray Jay were also seen. Once we were back on to the tarred road we took the Signal Mountain turning and headed up through the coniferous forest. Close to the top of the road we located a male Blue/Dusky Grouse that gave good roadside views and at the top there were a couple of Western Tanagers to be seen and a Hermit Thrush was heard singing. The views were outstanding and on the plains below we could see Elk, Bison and Pronghorns wandering about feeding. As time was getting on, we headed back to our accommodation seeing a couple of Sandhill Cranes and numerous Elk as we went.

Monday 23rd June

A few of the group set off out for a sunrise photographic trip. This consisted of fairly brief visits to the Oxbow Bend, Jackson Lake Dam and the Pilgrim Pond. At each location the views to the Teton Mountains were simply quite stunning. We also encountered a little

wildlife including a Muskrat at the Oxbow, about 100 American White Pelicans and a rather confiding Beaver at the Dam and a Killdeer at Pilgrim Pond.

After the usual sumptuous breakfast we headed south and took the Two Ocean Lake road. American Robins and Pine Siskins were fairly frequent and a Red-naped Sapsucker was seen in some Aspen forest. A female Black-headed Grosbeak was well seen, Mountain Bluebirds were quite numerous, as were Tree Swallows which were presumably nesting in old woodpecker holes. Other birds noted along the roadside included Plumbeous Vireo, Northern Flicker and House Wren. At the lake itself there were many birds on view. A pair of Common Ravens circled above us, Song Sparrow and a Great Blue Heron were along the banks and a Beaver swam off into the emergent vegetation. Waterfowl were numerous and included Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, Goosander, both types of Scaup (Greater and Lesser), Barrows Goldeneye, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Western and Black-necked Grebes.

Our next location was Pacific Creek where we paused at the same spot as the previous day. Here we heard a Sora calling at fairly short range and we were actually able to look down among the willows and see the bird. Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wren were heard calling, a Yellow Warbler's nest was found and overhead we saw Red-tailed Hawk and our first Sharp-shinned Hawk. Whilst trying unsuccessfully to relocate the previous day's MacGillivray's warbler we did find a Western Wood Peewe. We returned to Colter Bay for lunch and afterwards we drove to the Jenny Lake area where we were able to take numerous pictures of various expanses of flowers (Arrow-leaved Balsamroot and lovely delicate-blue Lupins etc) with Grand Teton and Mount Moran beyond.

On our way towards Jackson Hole we saw a few Pronghorns on the sagebrush prairie and then we paused at Dornan's where there were at least 8 Cassin's Finches and a few Pine Siskins visiting the feeders. Closer to Jackson Hole we paused to overlook the Elk National Wildlife Refuge but for some reason, Elk seemed to be totally absent. Perhaps they had moved up to higher ground beyond our field of view to avoid the mozzies! The wetland area held Ring-necked Duck, Redheads, a pair of Trumpeter Swans, Barn Swallows hawking for insects and an American Kestrel hovering nearby. The final sightings were of Common Yellowthroat and Crane (of the Sandhill variety not the blue construction crane rising above the town!).

Within Jackson Hole itself there were a few American Crows and many Common Ravens to be seen but many of the group were more interested in visiting the Images of Nature gallery and other 'outlet facilities'! After a super dinner in a restaurant beside the town square, we began our journey back towards Colter Bay. A little to the north of Jackson Hole we saw a couple of Common Nighthawks but then we cursed a little to be sent on a diversion because of an accident further up the road towards the destination that contained our beds. However, 'all was forgiven' when we encountered a female Moose and her two well-grown youngsters. It was dark by the time we eventually reached Colter Bay and everyone was pleased to head for their lodges after a long and successful day of wildlife watching.

Tuesday 24th June

Various members of the group did a little birding around the cabins before breakfast and saw Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Chipping Sparrow, Common Crossbill, Uinta Ground Squirrel, Chickaree and Yellow-pine Chipmunk. After breakfast we began the journey to West Yellowstone and paused at the north end of Jackson Lake where there were lots of Canada Geese, a group of about 14 Black-necked Grebes, at least 10 American White Pelicans flew past in the distance and an Osprey passed just overhead. As we headed on into Yellowstone National Park, things were relatively quiet in the wildlife line until after we passed the Old Faithful area. Close to the Firehole area we paused and began to see a little wildlife including a Hairy Woodpecker's nest. Just beyond there were people approaching Bison in a way the signs prohibited and seemed totally unaware of the potential dangers involved. Further along a Bald Eagle was seen on its nest, Goosanders and Spotted Sandpipers were noted on the river

bank and then we came across a larger group of Bison in the Madison River Valley. These were again right on the roadside and gave excellent photo opportunities including of females and calves.

We left the Park at West Yellowstone and after securing our picnics, headed east towards Island Park. A short distance along the road we turned on to a dirt road and were soon enjoying lunch. We ate our picnics among pines and a quantity of blooming flowers before completing the journey to the Angler's Lodge. After spending a while settling into our rooms, we drove the short distance to Harriman State Park to search for wildlife.

At our first stop we overlooked a lake where a few good species could be seen. These included Western grebe, Spotted Sandpiper, Canvasback, Redhead and American Wigeon on the lake. Forster's Tern and at least 3 Caspian Terns were flying around along with a couple of Ring-billed Gulls while a Marsh Wren could be heard calling in the emergent vegetation. We drove from this lake to the car park area and walked out to overlook the nearby river and here we found quite a number of other species including Osprey, Bonaparte's and Franklin's Gulls, Turkey Vulture, 7 Sandhill Cranes and a group of White Pelicans. As we left the area to head back for our evening meal we saw a couple of common Ravens flying around and a fine male Mountain Bluebird on fence posts. During the call over of species and during our evening meal a few birds were seen on the river just outside the hotel including an Osprey that caught a fish on its third splash-down.

Wednesday 25th June

Around Anglers Lodge as we woke this morning were the usual Tree Swallows and American Robins as well as Ring-billed Gulls, Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper on the river. We would spend all of the day at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge but needless to say paused for numerous birding stops on the way there. A couple of feeders at one particular house during our journey attracted Pine Siskins and a Broad-tailed Hummingbird, while a little further on a second species of hummer was seen namely Calliope Hummingbird. We saw one or two Swainson's Hawks during the journey and a Turkey Vulture but the most numerous raptor was, as usual, Red-tailed Hawk. One of these flew up almost from the roadside carrying prey. In various areas of Aspen forest we found species like Olive-sided Flycatcher and Red-naped Sapsucker and at one location we had 5 American White Pelicans flying past.

Heading on to the reserve proper we were soon encountering Uinta Ground Squirrel, Vesper Sparrows and a Willow Flycatcher and when we reached a rest room area beside Red Rocks Lake we paused to admire the many species of water birds. Double-crested Cormorant flew off as we approached the water side, Franklin's Gulls were flying around feeding and as well as the many usual species of wildfowl there were Trumpeter Swans, White Pelican, Eared and Western Grebes to be seen. Also of interest here were Buffleheads, Ruddy Duck and Cinnamon Teal whilst around the car park were Western Wood Peewee and Black-headed Grosbeak.

From here we drove to the visitor centre and whilst finding out that some of the refuge roads had been washed out by swollen rivers recently, some of the group saw American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Mountain Bluebird and Eastern Kingbird around the parking lot. We drove on some distance beyond the visitor centre and were able to see at least 3 more Red-tailed Hawks and a Bald Eagle whilst Pronghorns were fairly frequent. We also saw our first Western Meadowlarks for a number of days. By now it was time to begin the journey back to Angler Lodge but we left with time to pause on the journey. Strangely as we drove back all of the Pronghorns seen on the outward journey had now disappeared from view but in some Aspen forest we found Warbling Vireo as well as nesting Tree Swallows and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Of the later species we found two occupied nests less than 100 yards apart along the roadside and these birds allowed a very close approach. We completed the journey back

to our hotel with little new to report except at one point we had very close views of another Swainson's Hawk. Once again we enjoyed a fine evening meal before heading to our rooms to prepare for our homeward journey the following day.

Thursday 26th June

We had breakfast at 7.45 a.m. before and during which we noted a passing Osprey, Mule Deer, Great Blue Heron and Spotted Sandpiper on the river banks and American Robin singing from the television aerial. All packed, after breakfast we began the journey towards Boseman and our flight back to the UK and Ireland. We passed the meadows full of White Mules-ears and lovely blue Larkspurs but today, for some reason, the fields did not seem to contain any pronghorns. Passing through the forested area we saw two Ospreys on their roadside telegraph-pole nest and at various points throughout the rest of the journey we saw occasional Red-tailed Hawks and one or two American Kestrels. Along the roadside river to the north of West Yellowstone we also saw an American Dipper and a few 'mad fools' engaged in white water rafting!

After a quick stop for a few shop purchases we reached Boseman Airport in good time for our flight to Minneapolis. We thanked Greg Smith for his excellent leadership and company, checked in and were soon seated in the departure lounge and sampling the delights of airport sandwiches! Our flight to Minneapolis was on time and after a meal at that airport we boarded the overnight flight homeward and arrived at Heathrow on time on **Friday 27th June**.

SPECIES LIST

BIRDS

PHEASANTS & ALLIES Phasianidae

Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	A female with 9 chicks were seen in Helen Carlson's garden and nearby on 15 th & 16 th .
Ruffed Grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	A male was seen at Pacific Creek on 22 nd .
Dusky (Blue) Grouse	<i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>	A single male was seen near the summit of Signal Mountain on 22 nd .
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	2 seen on prairies near Molt on 16 th .

WILDFOWL Anatidae

Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Seen every full day of the tour except 17 th .
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	The first were 2 at the Elk National Wildlife Refuge on 23 rd and then on 24 th we saw a single bird at Harriman State Park. The following day there were at least 6 at the Red Rock NWR.
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	First seen on 16 th near Broadview and then seen on a further 4 days.
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	First seen on 16 th near Broadview and then seen on a further 6 days in small numbers.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Noted every day except 14 th .
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	Seen on 16 th near Broadview and on 20 th in the Gull Point area.
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>	Seen close to Broadview on 16 th then seen in the Hayden Valley on 19 th and then seen on 3 successive days from 23 rd .

Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Seen on 16 th near Broadview and then singles seen on a further 3 days.
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Just a pair seen near Acton on 16 th .
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	The first were near Acton and Broadview on 16 th then seen in small numbers on a further three days.
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	First seen on Broadview Pond on 16 th and also seen on 24 th & 25 th .
Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>	Four at Lake Elmo near Billings on 15 th then seen the following day near Broadview and on 3 successive days from 23 rd .
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	First seen on Broadview Pond on 16 th and then on 3 successive days from 23 rd .
(Greater) Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	First seen on 21 st near Fishing Bridge and also noted on 23 rd , 24 th & possibly 25 th .
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	First seen on 18 th at the Black –tail Pull off and then noted on a further four days and probably 25 th .
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Just a single male seen on 18 th beside the Yellowstone River.
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Seen on 4 successive days from 18 th and 3 days from 23 rd .
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	One on 19 th on the Yellowstone River and also seen on 24 th .
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	Half a dozen on the Yellowstone River on 19 th and then seen on a further three days.
Common Merganser (Goosander)	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Seen every day from 18 th .
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Just a female seen at Broadview Pond on 16 th .
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	First seen on 16 th near Acton, then small numbers noted on a further three days.
GREBES Podicipedidae		
Pied Billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Just a single bird seen near Broadview on 16 th .
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	
Black-necked (Eared) Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	At least half a dozen on Broadview Pond on 16 th where they were probably nesting and also noted in larger numbers on 3 successive days from 23 rd .
Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	At least 10 at Lake Elmo on 15 th were our first, then also seen on 16 th , 21 st , 23 rd , 24 th & 25 th .
Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>	Single bird on 19 th on Yellowstone Lake was our first and we also saw the species at Mary Bay on 21 st .
IBISES & SPOONBILLS Threskiornithidae		
White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	Two at Broadview Pond on 16 th was our only sighting.

HERONS, EGRETS & BITTERN Ardeidae**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*

Small numbers seen on 10 days of the tour with the most sightings on 16th near Broadview.

PELICANS Pelicanidae**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

At least 40 seen in flight near Billings on 15th then small numbers seen on 19th, 20th & 21st. There were over 100 on Jackson Lake for the early risers on 23rd and the species was also seen on 24th, 25th & finally on 26th on the way to Bowsman Airport.

CORMORANTS Phalacrocoracidae**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Singles noted on 5 days with the first being on 20th at Gull Point Drive.

NEW WORLD VULTURES Cathartidae**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*

A couple seen on our day in the prairies on 16th then a group of five was noted during the drive towards Red Lodge the next day. Single birds also noted on a further 3 days and 2 birds were noted on 24th & 25th.

FALCONS & CARACARAS Falconidae**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*

Small numbers seen on 8 days of the tour.

KITES, HAWKS & EAGLES Accipitridae**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

Noted every day from 15th–26th except 16th.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

First seen on 20th in the Hayden Valley and then noted on the following 5 days.

Northern (Hen) Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A good number of birds were seen on the prairies around the Broadview area on 16th.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*

Single birds seen on 3 successive days from 23rd.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii***Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

Just a single sighting at Canyon on 19th.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

Singles seen on 16th, 19th & 26th and at least 4 were seen in the Red Rock Lakes NWR area on 25th.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

The only raptor which was noted every full day of the tour.

Ferruginous Hawk *Buteo regalis*

At least 4 seen on the prairies around Broadview on 16th and a single bird noted on 24th on the journey towards Island Park.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

At least 9 sightings on the prairies near Billings on 16th and then single birds seen on the next 2 days.

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS Rallidae**Sora Rail***Porzana carolina*

This bird's distinctive call was heard on 16th near Broadview and at Pacific Creek on 22nd. On 23rd, again at Pacific Creek, a bird was heard calling at fairly close range and was seen by some of the group. Noted on 4 days of the tour.

American Coot*Fulica americana***CRANES Gruidae****Sandhill Crane***Grus canadensis*

At least 8 seen on 17th in the lower lying parts of our journey to Cooke City and then noted on a further 7 days of the tour including at least 10 at Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25th.

AVOCETS & STILTS Recurvirostridae**Black-necked Stilt***Himantopus mexicanus*

A few seen on Broadview Ponds on 16th.

American Avocet*Recurvirostra americana*

A few seen on Acton & Broadview Ponds on 16th.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS Charadriidae**Killdeer***Charadrius vociferus*

First noted on 15th at River Front Park and then noted on a further 7 days in small numbers.

SANDPIPERS Scolopacidae**Marbled Godwit***Limosa fedosa*

Just a single bird seen at Broadview Pond on 16th.

Long-billed Curlew*Numenius americanus*

Two seen on the prairies near Molt on 16th.

Upland Sandpiper*Bartramia longicauda*

2 near Acton and then a further 4 adults (one with at least 3chicks) on the prairies near Molt.

Spotted Sandpiper*Actitis macularius*

The most frequently encountered wader with sightings on 9 days.

Willet*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

At least 5 seen at Broadview Pond on 16th.

Wilson's Phalarope*Phalaropus tricolor*

Very numerous on various ponds close to Acton & Broadview on 16th.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS Laridae**Ring-billed Gull***Larus delawarensis*

Just noted on 3 days from 24th on the river outside Angler Lodge in particular.

California Gull*Larus californicus*

2 on 16th on Broadview Pond and then seen on a further 6 days from 19th.

Franklin's Gull*Larus pipixcan*

First noted on 24th at Harriman State Park on 24th, then lots seen at Red Rock NWR the following day.

Bonaparte's Gull*Larus philadelphia*

A few seen at Harriman State Park on 24th.

Caspian Tern*Hydroprogne caspia*

3 at Harriman State Park on 24th and seen from the Angler's Lodge the following day.

Forster's Tern*Sterna forsteri*

Just a couple seen at Harriman State Park on 24th.

Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	2 on Broadview Pond on 16 th was the only sighting.
PIGEONS & DOVES Columbidae		
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Just noted on 15 th , 16 th & 17 th mainly in Billings.
American Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Frequently encountered on 15 th , 16 th & 17 th and then singles seen on 22 nd , 24 th & 25 th .
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	A single bird was seen at Billings on 15 th and we saw a couple at Red Lodge on 17 th .
NIGHTJARS Caprimulgidae		
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	1 at Lake Elmo and 2 at Two Moon Park on 15 th then 5 at Broadview Pond the following day. Finally, 2 seen as we drove back towards Colter Bay from Jackson Hole on 23 rd .
SWIFTS Apodidae		
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatilis</i>	At least 4 seen by the cliffs above Billings on 15 th .
HUMMINGBIRDS Trochilidae		
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	1 on 22 nd at Pacific Creek and 1 on the way towards Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Calliope Hummingbird	<i>Stellula calliope</i>	1 on the way towards Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
KINGFISHERS Alcedinidae		
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	Singles at Two Moon Park and River Front Park on 15 th and 1 at Fishing Bridge on 21 st .
WOODPECKERS Picidae		
Red-naped Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	The first was beside the Snake River on 22 nd then the next day one was seen on the way towards Two Ocean Lake then on 25 th we saw at least 4 birds on the way to & from Red Rock Lakes NWR and this included 2 active nests.
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	Singles seen at Two Moon Park and River Front Park on 15 th .
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>	First seen at River Front Park on 15 th then singles noted on a further 5 days.
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	The most frequently encountered woodpecker with sightings on 8 days.
TYRANT FLYCATCHERS Tyrannidae		
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	1 at Lake Elmo on 15 th and also seen on the prairies the following day. Then not seen again until 25 th

Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	when 1 was seen at Red Rock Lakes NWR. 1 at Pacific Creek on 22 nd and 1 on the way to and from Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	Singles seen on 16 th , 17 th , 23 rd , 24 th & 25 th .
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	Just a single bird seen beside the lake at Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Hammond's Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax hammondii</i>	A single bird seen near Junction Butte on 18 th and 19 th .
American Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>	A single bird seen at Pacific Creek on 23 rd .
Cordilleran Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax occidentalis</i>	1 seen on the way back from Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	1 beside Lake Elmo on 15 th and also seen on the following 2 days.
Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	Seen on the prairies on 16 th and at Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
VIREOS Vireonidae		
Western Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo swainsoni</i>	Heard on 15 th at Lake Elmo then seen on 22 nd at Pilgrim Creek. The species was also identified on 23 rd & 25 th .
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	At least 2 seen at Two Moon Park on 15 th .
Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i>	2 on 17 th at the Parkside Campground then also noted on 4 consecutive days from 21 st .
JAYS & CROWS Corvidae		
Gray Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	The first was in the Lamar Valley as we watched Mountain Goats on Barronette Cliffs on 18 th then we saw the species on a further 4 occasions.
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	Just a couple seen in the upper part of the Lamar Valley on 18 th .
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Heard at Lake Elmo on 15 th .
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>	Small numbers seen every day except 20 th .
Clark's Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	2 different individuals seen in forest either side of the Beartooth Pass on 17 th then 3 seen together close to the Yellowstone River on 19 th .
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Noted every day except 22 nd .
Northern (Common) Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen every day except 15 th & 26 th .
WAXWINGS & ALLIES Bombycillidae		
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	First seen at Two Moon Park (10) and River Front Park (4+) on 15 th and also seen on a further 4 days.
TITS & CHICKADEES Paridae		
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Parus atricapillus</i>	2 at River Front Park on 15 th and also seen on the following 2 days.
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Parus gambeli</i>	Heard on 18 th & 19 th but then good views were obtained right by our

cabins at Lake Village on 20th & 21st as well as at Colter Bay on 23rd.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS Hirundinidae

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*

Seen on 15th & 16th near Billings and Broadview respectively then not encountered again until 21st when 2 were seen during our boat trip on the Snake River.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Noted every day except 16th & 20th. Seen every day except 16th.

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

Seen on 15th at Two Moon Park and also noted on 3 consecutive days from 21st.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

A few were seen on 9 days of the tour.

American Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

Seen every day of the tour except 24th.

LARKS Alaudidae

Horned (Shore) Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Just seen on our tour around the prairies on 16th when dozens, perhaps hundreds were seen on roadside fences etc.

KINGLETS Regulidae

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

Heard most days in coniferous woodlands but not actually seen until we reached Colter Bay in Grand Teton NP.

WRENS Troglodytidae

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Heard on 23rd at Pacific Creek and on 24th at Harriman State Park.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Just noted on 3 days, 15th at Two Moon Park, 23rd at Two Ocean Lake Road and 25th on the way back from Red Rock Lakes NWR.

NUTHATCHES Sittidae

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

Glimpsed mobbing a Swainson's Hawk (!) at the Lake Village cabins on 19th and heard calling on 21st and 22nd.

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*

Just a single bird well seen at River Front Park in Billings on 15th.

MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS Mimidae

Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

At least 3 seen at Two Moon Park and River Front Park on 15th.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus*

1 well seen and another heard in the Lamar Valley on 18th and the following day, the same bird was seen on exactly the same bush!

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Just a single sighting on the cliffs overlooking Billings on 15th.

STARLINGS Sturnidae

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Noted in the lower lying areas on the first 3 days and the last 3 days.

THRUSHES Turdidae**Mountain Bluebird***Sialia currucoides*

This lovely species was well seen every day from 17th to the 25th inclusive except 22nd.

Townsend's Solitaire*Myadestes townsendi*

Just a single bird seen from the viewpoint on the way up to Bear Tooth Pass on 17th.

Hermit Thrush*Catharus guttatus*

Just a single encounter with a bird heard singing on 22nd on Signal Mountain.

American Robin*Turdus migratorius*

Seen every day in good numbers. Seeing a Swainson's Hawk robbing an American Robin's nest of its brood of youngsters on 19th as we arrived at Lake Village deserves a mention!

DIPPERS Cinclidae**American Dipper***Cinclus mexicanus*

A single bird was seen at the Parkside Campground on 17th, a pair were feeding young in a nest built openly on a bridge over Lava Creek on 18th and a single bird was seen on 26th as we drove beside the Gallatin River.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS Passeridae**House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

Seen on each of the first 3 days in built up areas.

WAGTAILS & PIPITS Motacillidae**American (Buff-bellied) Pipit***Anthus rubescens*

Just seen on the high ground at Beartooth pass on 17th where there were quite a few feeding beside smaller patches of snow.

FINCHES & ALLIES Fringillidae**Pine Siskin***Carduelis pinus*

Small numbers seen on 7 days of the tour with the first being on 17th.

American Goldfinch*Carduelis tristis*

2 seen at the rest area we stopped at on the way to Red Lodge on 17th.

Black Rosy-finch*Leucosticte atrata*

Perhaps as many as 80 seen over a period of time at feeders in Red Lodge on 17th.

Cassin's Finch*Carpodacus cassinii*

First seen on 18th at the Yellowstone River pullout and then on a further 5 days with the most (at least 8) at Dornan's on feeders.

House Finch*Carpodacus mexicanus*

Heard on 15th at River Front Park then noted on 17th & 19th.

Common (Red) Crossbill*Loxia curvirostra*

3 seen at the viewpoint car park on the way up to Beartooth Pass on 17th and 2 at Colter Bay on 24th.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS Parulidae**American Yellow Warbler***Dendroica petechia*

The most frequently encountered warbler with sightings on 9 days.

Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Seen on 8 consecutive days from 18 th in smaller numbers than the previous species.
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Dendroica striata</i>	Just a single sighting in aspen woods on the way back from Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	At least 4 seen at Two Moon Park on 15 th .
MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Oporornis tolmiei</i>	Seen briefly at Pilgrim Creek on 22 nd and also at Pacific Creek later that day and on 23 rd .
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	Heard at Two Moon Park on 15 th and then seen at the Elk NWR on 23 rd .
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>	Heard during our picnic lunch beside Jackson Lake on 21 st and also noted the following day.
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>	2 seen and more heard at Two Moon Park on 15 th .
NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS Icteridae		
Bullock's Oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i>	At least 1 seen on the ridge overlooking Billings on 15 th and another seen on 17 th .
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Noted on 7 days mostly near cattle and bison.
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Noted every day except 21 st & 24 th .
Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	Seen on 16 th and every day from 18 th .
Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Just seen on each of the first 4 days.
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	Although outside of its normal range, a bird of this species was seen by a couple of members of the group on 16 th .
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Very common on the prairies on 16 th then seen on the next 3 days in various locations and at Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus x'ocephalus</i>	Just seen on 15 th , 16 th & 18 th .
BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS Emberizidae		
McCown's Longspur	<i>Calcarius mccownii</i>	A bird or two of this species was eventually found on the prairies close to Molt on 16 th .
Chestnut-collared Longspur	<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>	More common than usual on the prairies to the west of Billings on 16 th .
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	Seen on 15 th at Two Moon Park and then seen again on 24 th & 25 th .
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	Just seen on 21 st at Mary Bay.
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	One of the more frequently encountered sparrows with sightings on 7 days.
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Seen on 5 days with the first being in the upper part of the Lamar Valley on 18 th .
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	Seen on 5 days with perhaps the best views at Mary Bay on 21 st .

Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Another fairly frequently encountered sparrow; seen on 7 days.
Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	Seen on 18 th , 19 th & 22 nd and heard on 25 th .
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>	Just seen in sagebrush countryside on the prairies on 16 th and at Red Rock Lakes NWR on 25 th .
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	2 seen at Rapelje on 16 th .
Lark Bunting	<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>	Frequent on the prairies on 16 th .
Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Chlorura chlorura</i>	Just seen on 22 nd at Pilgrim Creek.
TANAGERS & ALLIES Thraupidae		
Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	Small numbers seen on 7 days from 18 th .
GROSBEAKS, SALTATORS & ALLIES Cardinalidae		
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>	A male seen at Two Moon Park and a female at River Front Park on 15 th and then seen on a further 4 days from 21 st .
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	A male at Two Moon Park on 15 th was our only sighting.
Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i>	A male at River Front Park was well seen on 15 th .
MAMMALS		
LAGOMORPHS Pikas Lagomorpha-Ochontonidae		
American Pika	<i>Ochotona princeps</i>	Heard calling among rocks in the Firehole Canyon on 24 th but sadly not seen.
LAGOMORPHS - Rabbits & Hares Lagomorpha-Leporidae		
Desert (Audubon's) Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	Seen around Billings on 15 th and on the prairies on 16 th .
RODENTS – Squirrels Rodentia-Sciuridae		
Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus nayaritensis</i>	Just a single sighting at Two Moon Park on 15 th .
Yellow-bellied Marmot	<i>Marmota flaviventris</i>	5 on 17 th just beyond the Beartooth Pass and then seen on 18 th , 24 th and 25 th .
Golden-mantled G'd Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>	Singles seen on 20 th and 21 st .
Uinta Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus armatus</i>	Seen on 5 consecutive days from 21 st .
Richardson's Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus richardsoni</i>	Seen on 6 days in widely spaced locations.
Black-tailed Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Just seen on the prairies to the west of Billings on 16 th where the species occurs in very large numbers.
Yellow-pine Chipmunk	<i>Tamias amoenus</i>	Only specifically identified at Colter Bay on 24 th .
Least Chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>	This delightful little mammal was first seen as we climbed towards Beartooth Pass on 17 th and then was recorded on a further 3 days.
Douglas's Squirrel (Chickaree)	<i>Tamiasciurus douglasii</i>	Seen on 6 consecutive days from 19 th with the most sightings being around our cabins at Colter Bay.

RODENTS – Beavers Rodentia-Castoridae**American Beaver** *Castor canadensis*

At least 4 seen on our raft trip down the Snake River on 21st and a single individual was seen at Jackson Lake Dam on 23rd. Beaver lodges and dams were seen on numerous other occasions.

RODENTS Rats, Mice & Voles Rodentia-Muridae**Meadow Vole** *Microtus pennsylvanicus*

Lots of signs such as runways built beneath the snow but no actual sightings.

Muskrat *Ondatra zibenthicus*

1 on 15th at River Front Park and 1 on 23rd at the Oxbow Bend.

CARNIVORES – Dogs Carnivora-Canidae**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

1 on 18th near the Yellowstone River then there was a family of 4 (a female and 3 cubs) at Colter Bay and these were seen on 22nd & 23rd. Finally, 1 was seen on 24th.

Coyote *Canis latrans*

Good numbers seen in various locations on 4 days especially in the Lamar and Hayden Valleys.

Gray Wolf *Canis lupus*

Packs of 10 and 8 individuals seen in the Lamar Valley on 18th. Both packs (Druid & Slough Packs respectively) were revisiting the carcasses of animals killed on earlier days.

CARNIVORES – Bears Carnivora-Ursidae**American Black Bear** *Ursus americanus*

9 were seen on 18th and another 2 the following day mainly in the Lamar Valley. A good tour for this species.

Grizzly Bear *Ursus arctos horribilis*

A sow & cub seen above the Lamar Canyon on 18th and then a different sow and cub were in the Hayden Valley on 20th & 21st.

CARNIVORES - Mustelids Carnivora-Mustelidae**American Pine Marten** *Martes americanus*

Just a single very brief sighting on the climb up to the Beartooth Pass on 17th.

EVEN-TOED UNGULATES-Pronghorn Artiodactyla-Antilocapridae**Pronghorn** *Antilocapra americana*

At least 50 seen on the prairies to the west of Billings on 16th then seen in various locations in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks on 8 days.

EVEN-TOED UNGULATES - Deer Artiodactyla-Cervidae**American Elk (Wapiti)** *Cervus canadensis*

Seen in good numbers on 7 consecutive days from 18th.

Moose *Alces alces*

Just a female and 2 well grown calves seen not far from Jackson Hole on 23rd and a female and

Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	young were seen as we drove towards Boseman on 26 th . Small numbers seen every day from 16 th .
White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Only specifically identified on 5 days.

EVEN-TOED UNGULATES-Cattle Artiodactyla-Bovidae

Bighorn Sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	A male was seen close to the Yellowstone River on 18 th and 19 th . A female and 1 youngster were seen on the Barronette Cliffs on 18 th . First seen in the Lamar Valley on 18 th where expectations were exceeded as we saw perhaps 500 individuals! The species was also recorded on the next 6 days in various parts of Yellowstone & Grand Teton National Parks.
Mountain Goat	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>	
American Bison	<i>Bison bison</i>	

The following species were also noted :-**AMPHIBIANS**

Western Chorus Frog	<i>Pseudacris triseriata</i>
Bull Frog	

LARGER FISH

Yellowstone Cut-throat Trout	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkii</i>
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BUTTERFLIES

Baird's swallowtail	<i>Papilio bairdii</i>
Western tiger swallowtail	<i>Pipilio rutulus</i>
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Orange-tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>
Clouded sulphur	<i>Colias phyllodice</i>
Mustard white	<i>Pieris oleracea</i>
Monarch (Milkweed)	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>
Mourning cloak	
(Camberwell beauty)	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>
Milbert's (fire rim) tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis milberti</i>
American painted lady	<i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>
Painted lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>

MOTHS

White-lined sphinx	
(Striped hawkmoth)	<i>Hyles lineata</i>

FLOWERS

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	- Yarrow
<i>Actaea rubra</i>	- Baneberry
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	- Serviceberry
<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	- Pearly everlasting
<i>Anemone multifida</i>	- Cliff anemone
<i>Anemone Nuttalliana</i>	- Pasque flower
<i>Antennaria microphylla</i>	- Rosy pussytoes
<i>Aquilegia flavescens</i>	- Yellow columbine
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	- Bearberry or kinnikinnick
<i>Arenaria nuttallii</i>	- Nuttall's sandwort
<i>Arnica cordifolia</i>	- Heartleaf arnica
<i>Artemisia cordifolia</i>	- Sagebrush

Astragalus alpine - Alpine milk-vetch
Balsamorhiza sagittaria - Arrowleaf or Indian balsamroot
Berberis repens - Creeping Oregon grape
Brodiaea douglasia - Douglas' brodiaea
Calypso bulbosa - Fairy slipper
Camassia auamash - Common camas
Cerastium Arvense - Field chickweed
Clematis columbiana - Columbia clematis
Clematis hirsutissima - Sugarbowls
Collinsia parviflora - Blue-eyed Mary
Collomia linearis - Collomia
Cymopterus hendersonii - Henderson's cymopterus
Cynoglossum officinale - Hound's tongue
Delphinium nuttallianum - Upland larkspur
Dodecatheon pulchellum - Dark-throated shooting star
Douglasia Montana - Rocky Mountain douglasia
Erythronium grandiflora - Glacier lily
Euphorbia esula - Leafy spurge
Fragaria vesca - Woods strawberry
Frasera speciosa - Green gentian
Fritillaria atropurpurea - Leopard lily
Fritillaria pudica - Yellow bell
Gentiana detonsa - Western fringed gentian
Geranium richardsonii - Richardson's geranium
Geranium viscosissimum - Sticky geranium
Geum triflorum - Prairie smoke
Gilia aggregate - Scarlet gilia
Hackelia floribunda - Many-flowered stickseed
Haplopappus uniflorus - One-flowered goldenweed
Hydrophyllum capitatum - Ballhead waterleaf
Iris missouriensis - Rocky Mountain iris
Linum perenne - Blue flax
Lithophragma parviflora - Woodland star
Lithospermum ruderale - Stoneseed
Lomatium ambiguum - Swale desert parsley
Lonicera utahensis - Utah honeysuckle
Lupinus sericeus - Silky lupin
Melilotus officianalis - Yellow sweet clover
Mertensia ciliate - Mountain bluebell
Mimulus guttatus - Yellow monkey-flower
Nuphar polysepalum - Yellow pond lily
Oenothera subcaulis - Long-leaved evening primrose
Oxyria digyna - Mountain sorrel
Oxytropus lagopus - Rabbitfoot crazyweed
Oxytropus sericea - Silky crazyweed
Pachistima myrsinites - Mountain lover
Paeonia brownie - Brown's or Californian peony
Phacelia hastata - Silverleaf phacelia
Phlox hoodii - Hood's phlox
Polemonium pulcherrinum - Showy polemonium
Polygonum bistortoides - American bistort
Potentilla arguta - Tall cinquefoil
Potentilla fruticosa - Shrubby cinquefoil
Potentilla gracilis - Slender cinquefoil
Prunella vulgaris - Self-heal
Prunus virginiana - Common chokeberry
Ribes cereum - Squaw currant
Sambucus racemosa - Elderberry
Saxifraga occidentale - Western saxifrage
Senecio integerimus - Western groundsel

Smilacina racemosa - Western Solomon-plume
Smilacina stellata - Starry Solomon-plume
Sorbus scopulina - Mountain ash
Sphaeralcea coccinea - Scarlet globe mallow
Streptopus amplexifolia - Twisted stalk
Taraxacum officinale - Common dandelion
Thalictrum occidentale - Western meadowrue
Thlaspe arvense - Field penny-cress
Tragopogon pratensis - Meadow salsify
Valeriana edulis - Edible valerian
Viola adunca - Blue violet
Viola nuttallii - Nuttall's violet
Wyethia helianthoides - White wyethia
Xerophyllum tenax - Bear grass
Zigadenus venenosus - Meadow death-camas

What a great tour we had to these fabulous parts of the USA! We began around Billings and on the prairies to the west of Montana's largest city. After two days we had notched up over 100 bird species! This 'Big Sky Country' never fails to excite and amaze with magical pools, often full of birds, being found in the most unlikely of locations. Add to that the special species to be found on the prairie grasslands and in the sagebrush scrub and you know that this area almost deserves a tour on its own.

But how can we resist the appeal of the wildlife and geothermal attractions of Yellowstone, the World's oldest National Park. With the reintroduced population of Gray Wolves as well as Grizzly and Black Bears, hundreds of Bison and so much more to be seen, who could resist a visit to this magical place? Add in visits to the Old Faithful set of geysers and to the West Thumb Geyser Basin, amongst others, and you know you are a very special place indeed. Again we added many more bird species before moving on to arguably some of the most spectacular scenery in the States, Grand Teton National Park where once again we added lots more wildlife too.

Our final destination was at Island Park, to the west of West Yellowstone, where we could overlook a river from our hotel balcony and see Ospreys diving in for fish. From here we ventured out on to the prairies again and visited Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge where once again, the birding was really special.

My thanks go to Greg Smith for being such a fine and understanding local guide. He seemed to know almost everything about everything!! I am already looking forward to working with him again next year on the Travelling Naturalist tour to Arizona in the spring. Thanks also go to Helen Carlson who did such a splendid job of guiding us around the Billings area. I also thank Pippin Lanyon for supplying the flower list (and so promptly too!) but most of all, I thank all of you, our clients, for making this such a pleasurable tour to co-lead. We shared so much wildlife, some superbly scenic places and a huge number of laughs. I greatly look forward to the pleasure of your company on a future tour.

*Mike Read
2nd July 2008*