

# **Yellowstone & Tetons**

**Saturday 13 – Friday 26 June 2009**

## **Tour Leader**

Greg Smith

## **Daily Diary**

### ***Saturday June 13, 2009 - Arrival in Billings, MT***

Everybody made it to Billings on time so we gathered in the Rimrock Inn lobby to set off for dinner at Mackenzie River Restaurant. It had been decided that we would do our welcome dinner on the second night to give everyone a chance to catch up from their flights.

### ***Sunday June 14 – Billings Area***

After breakfast at the inn we headed off to explore Billings (with local outrageous birder Helen Carlson), with its lush landscaping and riverfront setting. Lake Elmo (a reservoir) gave us five of the six swallow species we would see today. Yellow Warbler was calling with a pitch that indicated nesting was imminent. Huge carp roiled the water surface as if trying to escape some underwater denizen.

Next we headed to Two Moon Regional Park where we were greeted by the chattiest of Yellow-breasted Chats. American Redstarts actively flushing insects with their orange epaulets, an Ovenbird in school looking for its “teacher, teacher, teacher”, the riparian zone was alive with birds! We finished our three mile hike with a small flock of American White Pelicans along the Yellowstone.

After lunch we went to Pictograph State Park, a gorgeous setting. The pictographs were faint in color, but the male Lazuli Bunting more than made up for the color loss. White-throated Swifts were diving by at eye-level creating a dizzying effect as you looked down slope.

Riverfront Park was our last stop where at least 100 Canada Goose goslings were roosting on the side of the pond. Still lots of chats going off, but that was it before we headed off to change and head out to our welcome dinner at Enzo’s Bistro. It was an excellent meal!

### ***Monday, June 15 – The Prairie***

We picked up Helen at her place and then headed out onto the prairies north of Billings. Our first stop was at a small residential ‘hood with conifers that was home to a couple of Pinyon Jays. As we waited for the jays (and they did arrive), a Spotted Towhee appeared at the bird bath (the only one for the trip).

Up on the plains we had numerous Pronghorn grazing along side the highway. We found Loggerhead Shrikes perched on the lines, numerous blackbirds and then a Ferruginous Hawk took flight from a power pole - an adult with those fancy rust-colored pantaloons that form a “V” as it flies.

We could see the thunderheads starting to shape up as we headed to the land of the longspurs. We got a distant look at a couple of displaying male McCown’s Longspurs as they flew high and then fluttered to the ground singing. Next it was male and female Chestnut-collared Longspurs on fence lines as we headed towards lunch at Rapalje. It was starting to rain, but we had to stop. There on a fence post was an Upland Sandpiper, followed shortly by a pair of calling Long-billed Curlews.

The curlews had good reason to be calling. They had a half-grown young foraging between them and there was a Swainson’s Hawk circling overhead. We left the family group and headed to lunch where the rain just had to give its all, but we were inside eating cheeseburgers.

After lunch we were off to dog town, the Black-tailed Prairie Dog town. Hundreds of these characters were trying to chirp in unison and failed miserably. But they were fun to watch as each mound interacted with its neighbor. It got really interesting when the Golden Eagle perched on an adjacent tower took flight.

Our last stop before heading back was a field where Peter had seen Burrowing Owls a few days earlier. And there they were, two pair of these long-legged subterranean nesters. They were actively foraging as we left and headed back to Billings for a well deserved meal and night's sleep.

***Tuesday, June 16 – Beartooth Pass***

Today we headed southwest towards Yellowstone in search of blue sky in the State of Big Sky. The morning was overcast as we headed down Route 212 where we stopped at a lay-by and did a little birding. American Goldfinches and a Willow Flycatcher were a couple of the new birds for our trip.

Just after turning back on the highway, Ian spotted a Wilson's Snipe sitting on a fence-post guarding his patch of turf. We pulled up next to him and everyone took as many photos as they wanted of this cooperative Woodcock-wannabe.

Within a hundred meters we turned north on a side street where we found three sincerely stunning male Bobolinks! Gorgeous birds displaying as if they knew they were the best!

After lunch at the Rock Creek Campground/Picnic site (where we had a Dipper making repeated feeding forays into its nest under the bridge) we headed up to the Beartooth where we were greeted with a patchwork of cumulus clouds, rain and bright blue sky. It is an ethereal feeling being in the clouds with no trees and seeing bright patches of purple wildflowers against the mat of last year's grasses. And then they started showing up, those Black Rosy Finches with their pink, gray, black and white tuxedos. Two or three flocks of these flying coal lumps kept our photo fingers itching. An amazing spectacle when you think of where they raise their young and eke out a living.

We headed down the other side where the rain was off and on. The marmots didn't care, as their short summer wanderings were all about fattening up for next winter. The snow-laden peaks chose to react flippantly with our views as we drifted from 11,000 feet down to 7,000 feet in Cooke City. Here we checked into the Alpine Hotel before heading off to another tasty meal, this time at the Beartooth Café!

***Wednesday, June 17 – Lamar Valley, Mammoth***

Off to the valley of wildlife we rode, anticipation riding along with us as we searched out the burly, the delicate and the unforgiving. Our first wildlife were the Mule deer as we entered the park. Next came the unruly Bison bachelor herd, with their dripping beards matching their loose coats of fuzz. Bloodshot eyes watched as we took turns photographing the burly boys. They are just so big...

Then the herds of cows with their cinnamon-colored young. They were scattered all over the valley. We parked and scanned the herds for telltale signs of approaching predators, no luck. No wolves, no bears, no predators, that is until we got back in the van and headed out of the valley.

Down the road on the south side we saw soil glued to plants in all directions. In the middle of this mess there were two Badger young with their mom looking at us with a pretentious curiosity. No threat was coming from our burgundy beast, so they worked the pile as if looking for buried treasure. Mom ambled off and so did we.

Next was the female Pronghorn with her one day old young. He was trying out various options with his legs including "pronging", the old phony limp and finally running at full tilt! No other word but "cute"!

After so many more ungulates we rounded the corner on our way to Mammoth, but we didn't get too far. Those four Coyote pups laid out in front of their den were show stealers. Lounging like they didn't have a care (and they didn't until the rain started to fall), their positions belied their future once on their own. Perfect coats against a perfect background, they were wonderful to watch!

After lunch among Mammoth's Elk we headed back to Lamar when we saw the full-curved Rocky Mountain

Bighorn sheep along side the road. He gazed placidly through the rain as cameras whirred and we watched him eat his fill of grasses.

But wait, there's more. We pulled into the big lay-by south of Soda Butte and could see all the wolfies were looking north, but not intently. We figured a wolf(ves) must have passed by them, but they had lost sight of it. We decided to drive towards Soda Butte hoping to find what the wolfies had lost. And there it was, an adult carrying an elk leg bone through the river. We pulled into the small turnout and got the scope on it as it moved northwest towards the Druid den site. As we were watching the wolf make its way to the den a Red-tailed Hawk landed about twenty meters away from us and picked up a Uinta Ground squirrel right in front of us. We almost achieved sensory overload...

We started to head towards Cooke City, but a Black Bear jam caused us to slow and take a few quick shots. The bear sat on his backside and looked at us as he hand picked grass for a light snack. After running into the Brits from Texas and seeing their shots of bears, we decided to take one more short run back into Lamar.

That was cut short by the cow moose that was bedded down next to the road. But we didn't linger because we wanted to add a couple of more mammals to our day list. The sun broke through the clouds just in time to illuminate another glossy Black Bear – right next to the road. Everyone got shots, great shots of the bear gulping grass.

One last stop before we headed to the Bistro for the outstanding cassollet. Barronette Mountain never fails when you want to see Mountain Goats. This was no exception as we saw two nimble-footed females with three young balancing on wall slick with ice. The kids were already agile and confident. What a way to end a wildlife kind of day!

#### ***Thursday, June 18 – Lamar, Tower and Hayden***

Although the morning was full of clouds and drizzle we soon saw breaks in the clouds. Bison dotted the valley as we headed to a high point at the western end to scope for predator/prey interaction. It didn't take long when a bear was pointed out on the far side of the valley. Either a very nervy or a very hungry Black Bear was taking it upon itself to try and take down a Bison.

It must've decided to charge to see if any weak animals were in the herd. The bear didn't even get close as the herd thundered away. The bear disappeared and the herd turned and moved in the opposite direction. Watching the synchronicity of this cow/calf herd could only remind us of days long ago when bison outnumbered people. Quite an inspiring view!

Slough Creek was flooded with the spring melt and made birding in that area impossible. We headed to a small hillside where we watched Mountain Chickadees interact with flighty Cassin's Finches. Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows displayed along side the road as we headed to Roosevelt for a welcome breakfast!

Calcite Springs had both Vaux's and White-throated Swifts vying for the most creative aerial acrobat status when along came a Peregrine who stole the show. All this while the pair of nesting Ospreys whistled alarm all at the smoking falcon.

Further down the columnar basalt-lined canyon we spotted seven Rocky Mountain Bighorn ewes, each with a young one bouncing off the sides of the cliff. The ewes were losing the winter coats while the young were defining the limits of parental temperament.

Just after getting back into the van we hit another bear jam, our third. And this one was good. There was an eleven year old boy (of course) tempting fate as he walked closer to the bruin to try for a better photograph. Our van was especially well behaved, choosing not to tempt fate and to distinguish our maturity.

We finished the day with a drive through the wide open Hayden Valley, where we finally saw an incredibly handsome silver-haired Grizzly Bear with a dark brown hump. It looked like a young bear as it was racing back and forth with no real direction in mind.

But that wasn't the end of our day as two of us watched an American Marten bound across the road in front of us!

***Friday, June 19 – Hayden Valley, Old Faithful & Geysers***

We drove the "Valley" again early in the morning looking for more of those big mammals. The Bison were there, Elk with calves were there and yesterday's grizzly was still there eating bear burritos. But no other biggies were found, so we headed off to Pelican Creek.

Pelican Creek was like glass! The reflection of trees and mountains in the bay matched the morning calm. A lone Pelican on a log stretched without rippling the water or its reflection. It was a "peaceful, easy feeling".

***Saturday, June 20 – West Thumb & Grand Teton***

We left the Lake Hotel and headed along the shore of Yellowstone Lake to West Thumb Geyser Basin. The thermal system here is shallow in comparison to other basins in the park. The park service states that if the lake were to drop just a few feet "an immense hydrothermal explosion could occur here."

As we followed the boardwalk that separates the lake from the basin we could see thermophiles that colored some of the steaming cauldrons. These microbes are able to thrive in high temperatures, and as such, give color to some of the waters associated with the basin (along with algae). At one point, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet foraged near the boardwalk giving us great looks at this noisy little singer of the forest.

Driving south to the Tetons, we left the huge Yellowstone caldera and started dropping towards Jackson Lake. There was still lots of snow on the ground at the higher elevations, but once we made the climb over the pass, the fields exploded with color. We had hit the peak of wildflower bloom!

We had lunch at a picnic area on the shores of the lake where Ospreys soared overhead and Red-eyed Vireos attempted serenading us. The aspen forest was alive with birds as we attempted to eat lunch without looking up at the local residents. Tasty lunch, great location.

We finished the day with a visit to the outstanding Native American Museum at the Colter Bay Visitor Center before heading to dinner at the Ranch House!

***Sunday, June 21 – Pilgrim Creek, Pacific Creek, Signal Mountain & Snake River***

An early start took us out to Pilgrim Creek where the wildflowers were outstanding. Not the same constituents we had in Yellowstone (like Glacier lily and Elephant's head), but fields of Lupine and Paintbrush. To see a Red Fox moving through the meadow was only enhanced by the breeze-driven waves of color.

Clark's Nutcrackers flew overhead as we tried to find the Olive-sided Flycatcher that repeatedly gave its "bring-three-beers" song. Chipping Sparrows were everywhere as were Spotted Sandpipers (who regularly nest along Pilgrim Creek). Yesterday's rain left puddles with muddy edges and a Coyote left its tracks having been at the creek just before us.

Pacific Creek winds its way back to Two Ocean Lake through low growing willow scrub and patchy aspen forest. Yellow Warbler was the most evident bird with males singing from the tops of all the willows. Grosbeaks, sapsuckers and wrens were some of the other vocal residents that made sure we all knew it was a gorgeous, sunny day.

Family groups of Canada Goose, Gadwall and Barrow's Goldeneye dotted the lake as we scanned for Common Loon. No luck on the loon, but the setting was spectacular!

Signal Mountain pokes up from the valley floor just south of Moran Junction. The view is spectacular as you can see in every direction except to the north. The forest sends fingers of trees into the sagebrush flats where Elk are grazing. Pools of water have other animals along their edges, but the big treat is watching a large male Black Bear amble out of the forest as we watched from above. Not a care in the world for that bear, or

for us.

We headed back down to Dornan's where we stopped at the new visitor center, what an outstanding venue! Visually provocative and the displays were well thought out and accessible, nice.

We headed over to an early dinner as we had to be back at the launch site for our evening float trip down the Snake. As we walked across the parking lot a male Broad-tailed Hummingbird sat perched in a small aspen, his gorget would flash pink as he balanced on his precarious perch. Outstanding looks at this mountain resident.

We met up with Neal, our raft guide for the next 2.5 hours. After a short drive to our launch site at Deadman's Bar, we headed down to the Snake that was flowing at 7500 cfs that day. We immediately saw a Beaver on the bank and then the first of three Bald Eagles. The looks were not long, given the speed of the river, but the animals didn't leave either, giving us great photo ops.

We saw Elk, Moose, and deer along with lots water birds. But the highlight were those mountains that were picking a fight with the clouds. One minute you couldn't see the sun and the next the mountains cleared and the sun would send shafts of light streaming towards us. Spectacular clouds danced around the peaks as we finished our trip and landed ashore.

### ***Monday, June 22 – Oxbow, Schumacher Landing, Mormon Row & Jackson Hole***

We were heading towards Jackson Hole this morning when we stopped at Oxbow Bend, one of the most scenic views of the Tetons within the park. The waters of the Snake River did have that glassy calm, which allowed for a stunning reflection of Mt. Moran and clouds. Definitely post card material for all that took a photograph!

Schumacher Landing is one of my favorite views of the Tetons. The reflection off of the decades-old Beaver pond captures the essence of the park. With the mountains, waterfowl-filled pond and Beaver lodge, you capture a feeling of serenity and wildness. Given the great weather, all of the above were enhanced to make this the memory of the day!

On our way to Mormon Row, we stopped at Cunningham Cabin, another site for photographing the Tetons. The show-stealer here was a pair of Mountain Bluebirds nesting in the trail sign post. Both male and female posed two meters away with bills crammed full of caterpillars. The birds were so audacious, they took our presence as a non-issue and fed their young right in front of us. The view and photographs of these Azure-breasted Prairie Hoverers were stunning in the morning light.

Mormon Row turned into a bit of a traffic jam with a herd of Bison cow/calf pairs deciding the road was the place to be. This was our closest view of the calves for the trip and everyone took advantage of the opportunity to get frame-filling head shots of the youngsters. And then there was that photographic barn...

Jackson Hole with all its history was explored for lunch during the early afternoon. After visiting the sites, it was decided that tea at the Jackson Lake Lodge was a great way to spend the late afternoon before heading back to Colter Bay for dinner.

### ***Tuesday, June 23 – Grassy Lake Road & Harriman State Park***

It was time to visit our third state, so we packed lunches and headed off to Idaho. Between the Tetons and Yellowstone there is a wonderful dirt road that heads west to the Land of Famous Potatoes. Known as Grassy Lake Road, the first section is also known as the John D. Rockefeller Memorial Parkway. Absolutely gorgeous! Green meadows with a mosaic of ponds, "mossies" flying hither and thither and secluded campsites make this an ideal drive.

We had fields of blue Camas, some acres in size. This electric blue lily was flanked by Yellow Pepper grass for an eye-popping combination! It was hard to leave this view, but we had a date with a pair of Trumpeter Swans. And right on cue we stopped at Indian Lake and the resident pair were set up on the far shore. With the scope we had excellent views of this huge bird, grace and poise seemed to dominate the descriptions.

As we headed towards our lunch break we figured we had passed four vehicles and three wagons on this three hour drive. This only increased the wilderness feeling.

On our way to Harriman State Park we stopped at Mesa Falls (both upper and lower) along the Henry's Fork River. The lower falls are a tumultuous jumble of rocks and pools, while the upper falls are a classic 300-foot wide precipice that drops 114 feet. Lots of pictures and faces full of mist...

Harriman Park is located a few miles from our lodging for the next two evenings – Angler's Lodge. With portions of the Henry's Fork, waterfowl abound. The highlight for this park was the adult Black-crowned Night-Heron that stood poised for pictures. We actually saw the bird take one step, and then it went back to its statue stance.

After a hike along the river we headed to our lodge and had an excellent meal. Time to rest up for our day at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge!

***Wednesday, June 24 – Red Rock Lakes National wildlife Refuge***

It is always amazing that you can be in a developed community and drive ten minutes and see a pair of Sandhill Cranes in a meadow foraging with their colts. The west is so open and wild, and we were just getting started.

After birding our way to the top of Red Rock Pass, we took a single dirt track to the north and went exploring. Through sagebrush flats edged with aspens we slowly worked north. A pair of Swainson's Hawks soared silently over a small hillock as Brewer's Sparrows froze silently watching fate and fortune glide past them. More Azure-breasted Prairie Hoverers found perches on small-stalked shrubs. Time was ticking as we headed back to the road to the refuge, we had more to find.

The big lake at the refuge had a pair of swans, Redheads and Canvasbacks, two species of grebes and a wonderful flock of alternate plumaged Franklin Gulls conducting Class A aerobatics as they caught insects on the wing. These are stunning birds!

We birded our way to the refuge where the resident biologist (Jeff Warren) shared the history of the refuge and the slow, but deliberate comeback of the Trumpeter Swan. It was growing late, so we birded our way back to the lodge and finished the day with our good bye dinner and stories of our journey through the wilds of the west.

***Thursday, June 25 – Bozeman and Billings***

It was our final day and the weather treated us to spectacular clouds and a safe drive back to Bozeman and Billings, where most caught their flights home. Safe landing to all.

153 Bird species  
30 Mammal species

**2009 YELLOWSTONE BIRD & ANIMAL LIST**

- Red-necked Grebe** – There was a pair at the north end of Henry's Lake – stunning plumage.
- Eared Grebe** – Most common at Red Rock Lake – alternate plumage on everyone!
- Western Grebe** – Scattered on most large bodies of water throughout the trip.
- American White Pelican** – On most fresh bodies of water, but those on the Yellowstone win.
- Double-crested Cormorant** – An adult and immature gave us great comparisons on the prairie.
- Great Blue Heron** – The best look was the ghostly bird in Hayden as the fog lifted.
- Great Egret** – Only one and that was in Billings.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron** – A stunningly plumaged adult at Harriman was well shot.
- Canada Goose** - Everywhere, everywhere, everywhere...
- Trumpeter Swan** – Our first two were on Indian Lake along Grassy Lake Road.
- Gadwall** – There always seemed to be a pair in adequately sized waters.
- American Wigeon** – Our first pair were in a pond at Slough Creek.
- Mallard** – Even if it is one of the more common ducks on the trip, the drake is absolutely stunning.
- Blue-winged Teal** – Only one in the pond north of Broadview on the prairie.
- Cinnamon Teal** – A pair at the same pond as the Mallard gave us the best look of all.
- Northern Shoveler** – Only a couple of males at the same pond north of Broadview.
- Northern Pintail** – One drake at the pond north of Broadview.
- Green-winged Teal** – One pair at the Broadview pond.
- Canvasback** – A pair seen on the last field day at Red Rock Lake.
- Redhead** – A male and female at Red Rock Lake were the only ones for the trip.
- Ring-necked Duck** – Two males and a female were on a pond west of Henry's Lake.
- Lesser Scaup** – Pairs were scattered in most mountain ponds.
- Bufflehead** – Very rare on this trip, but there were a few on Yellowstone Lake.
- Common Goldeneye** – A lone female on a pond along Pilgrim Creek Road was the only one.
- Barrow's Goldeneye** – Very common on Yellowstone, but the courting pair at Schumacher won.
- Common Merganser** – Common on most large streams for the trip.
- Ruddy Duck** – A few individuals at the pond north of Broadview were the only ones for the trip.
- Gray Partridge** – We saw a few of these birds paired up in the prairie north of Billings.
- Ring-necked Pheasant** – A few in the fields around Billings.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse** – A female in a field brooding her young during a rainstorm was a treat.
- Wild Turkey** – A hen in Helen's backyard with six young were all we saw, but we saw them well.
- Turkey Vulture** – Not common, but always seen in the air.
- Osprey** – This aerial fish hunter was seen a couple of times on almost every day.
- Bald Eagle** – Our first two were in the prairie sitting on adjacent posts, only one was an adult.
- Northern Harrier** – Mostly males were seen and we only saw them over their favored habitat, grassy fields.
- Swainson's Hawk** – A few over the prairie and one at Red Rock Lake.
- Red-tailed Hawk** – Our most common raptor.
- Ferruginous Hawk** – Two birds on two different nests in the prairie.
- Golden Eagle** – A single bird was seen flying low over the prairie, presumably looking for lunch.
- American Kestrel** – Not common, but the males we saw were stunning.
- Peregrine Falcon** – One at Calcite Springs was made even better because we watched it from above.
- Prairie Falcon** – A single bird flying around a barn near Rapelje.
- Sora** – We only heard this rail, but we heard it at least three times at Schumbacher Landing.
- American Coot** – Seen mostly at Riverfront Park in Billings.
- Sandhill Crane** – Scattered throughout the trip, but the best sighting was a pair with two colts.
- Killdeer** – A pair got up close and personal. Apparently they had a nest near the road at Red Rocks.
- American Avocet** – A gorgeous pair at the pond north of Broadview.
- Spotted Sandpiper** – Every stream seemed to have a vociferous pair.
- Upland Sandpiper** – Not as many as last year, but a couple of pairs let us get close.
- Long-billed Curlew** – A pair with a half grown chick in the prairie allowed us plenty of pictures.
- Wilson's Snipe** – A male surveying his domain from a fence post, allowed us within 15 feet.
- Wilson's Phalarope** – Not as many as expected, but a number of the prairie ponds were dry.
- Franklin's Gull** – Full alternate plumage adults were flycatching over Red Rock Lake.
- Bonaparte's Gull** – A flock dispersed over Henry's Fork as we watched from the deck.
- Ring-billed Gull** – Casual sightings over larger bodies of water.
- Caspian Tern** – Only seen in Idaho, huge compared to the other Laridae.
- Black Tern** – A few of these small obsidian colored flycatchers were at the pond near Broadview.
- Rock Pigeon** – Silos = Rock Pigeon, we had lots of silos in the prairie.
- Mourning Dove** – Usually seen flashing across our windshield as we drove Montana's back roads.
- Eurasian-collared Dove** – They are coming...
- Burrowing Owl** – Four individuals were a mile south of black-tailed prairie dog town.

- Common Nighthawk** – Our first was seen flying over and around the displaying McCowan's Longspur.
- Vaux's Swift** – Mixed in with a small flock of White-throated Swifts at Calcite Springs.
- White-throated Swift** – Common at Calcite Springs where it nests in the basalt columns.
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird** – A very cooperative male was on a short cottonwood at Dornan's.
- Belted Kingfisher** – Seen mostly at Harriman State Park or in other parts of that valley.
- Red-naped Sapsucker** – A few were seen, mostly in areas with aspens or cottonwoods.
- Downy Woodpecker** – Two Moon Park had a number of these little guys.
- Hairy Woodpecker** – Our best look was on the road from Billings to Red Lodge.
- Northern Flicker** – The most common woodpecker of the trip. Seen almost everyday.
- Olive-sided Flycatcher** – Finally got to see an individual on Grassy Lake Road.
- Western Wood-Pee-wee** – Our first was a cooperative bird at Two Moon Park.
- Alder Flycatcher** – A calling bird at Pelican Creek.
- Willow Flycatcher** – An individual at the roadside rest just north of Red Lodge was our only one.
- Least Flycatcher** – Great looks at a calling bird (actually two different individuals) at Two Moon.
- Hammond's Flycatcher** – In the forest at the lunch stop right after Red Lodge.
- Cordilleran Flycatcher** – The only definitive bird was calling at Red Rock Lake campground.
- Say's Phoebe** – Seen on the prairie nesting in an old pump house.
- Cassin's Kingbird** – Seen on the prairie by a farm house late in the afternoon.
- Western Kingbird** – Mostly on the prairie and second only to the Eastern in visibility.
- Eastern Kingbird** – Everywhere on the prairie and sporadic through the rest of the trip.
- Loggerhead Shrike** – We had 2-3 individuals out on the prairie.
- Warbling Vireo** – Quite common with best looks at Two Moon Park.
- Red-eyed Vireo** – A nice male calling continuously at Two Moon Park.
- Gray Jay** – A very cooperative bird at Two Ocean Lake in the Tetons.
- Pinyon Jay** – Two very cooperative birds at a bluff top housing development on Billings.
- Clark's Nutcracker** – Everyone finally got good looks on our way out of Red Rocks.
- Black-billed Magpie** – Everywhere and nonetheless stunning!
- American Crow** – Uncommon, seen mostly around the larger prairie farm residences.
- Common Raven** – Everywhere foraging on anything.
- Horned Lark** – Birds were taking flight as we drove on the prairie roads north of Billings.
- Tree Swallow** – One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Violet-green Swallow** – One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow** - One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Bank Swallow** - One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Cliff Swallow** - One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Barn Swallow** – One of the swallows on our six swallow day around Billings' lakes and rivers.
- Black-capped Chickadee** – All around Helen's place.
- Mountain Chickadee** – Common in the montane forest as we traveled around.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch** – Best looks were at Harriman State Park.
- White-breasted Nuthatch** – We heard two birds on the trip, but were never able to catch a glimpse.
- House Wren** – If we saw a wren, it was this little guy.
- Marsh Wren** – Heard but not seen at Two Moon Park in Billings.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet** – Our best look was at West Thumb geyser basin.
- Mountain Bluebird** – These azure-breasted prairie hoverers were scattered throughout our trip.
- Townsend's Solitaire** – Very good looks at an individual flycatching over Upper Mesa Falls.
- Swainson's Thrush** – Seen at West Thumb geyser basin.
- American Robin** – Our most common thrush and right up there for being commonly good looking.
- Gray Catbird** – Very good looks at Two Moon Park on the Yellowstone River.
- N. Mockingbird** – In and around Billings neighborhoods.
- European Starling** – What can I say, everywhere.
- American Pipit** – At 11,000 feet on the Beartooth Pass actively foraging and defending turf.
- Cedar Waxwing** – Nice looks at birds perched over the Yellowstone River in Billings.
- Yellow Warbler** – Singing and flying anywhere there were willows or cottonwoods.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler** – In the forests around Lake and Colter Bay.
- American Redstart** – Gorgeous males kept landing in front of us at Two Moon Park.
- Ovenbird** – A calling bird at Two Moon never quite let us get a look at him.
- N. orthern Waterthrush** – Seen in the marshy area along the Yellowstone in Two Moon Park.
- MacGillivray's Warbler** – Heard but not seen on the road over to Red Rock Lake.
- Common Yellowthroat** – Seen and heard calling at Two Moon Park.
- Wilson's Warbler** – Uncommon at best, with our best views at Two Moon.
- Yellow-breasted Chat** – Nice to have North America's largest warbler so common in Billings' riparian.
- Western Tanager** – We never got tired of looking at these explosions of color.
- Green-tailed Towhee** – Pilgrim Creek Road had a very cooperative male.
- Spotted Towhee** – Seen at the feeders where we had the Pinyon Jays.

**Chipping Sparrow** – Ubiquitous for the sparrow clan.  
**Brewer's Sparrow** – Sporadic sightings in the appropriate sagebrush habitat.  
**Vesper Sparrow** – Common up on the prairie.  
**Lark Sparrow** – A few individuals up on the prairie.  
**Lark Bunting** – Scattered sightings of males only up on the prairie.  
**Savannah Sparrow** – Where the habitat was just grass, we would sight a few of these individuals.  
**Song Sparrow** – We had these birds show up in streamside willow thickets along the Yellowstone.  
**White-crowned Sparrow** – Our first was also our highest, in the snow on Beartooth.  
**Dark-eyed Junco** – Easily found in the right habitat – mix scrub adjacent to forest.  
**McCowan's Longspur** – A long distance look at a displaying male.  
**Chestnut-collared Longspur** – Random birds sighted on fence and displaying in the prairie.  
**Black-headed Grosbeak** – At Two Moon Park along the Yellowstone.  
**Lazuli Bunting** – A gorgeous male sitting atop a tree at Petroglyph State Park.  
**Bobolink** – A total of five stunningly dressed males on the way to Red Lodge.  
**Red-winged Blackbird** – A small nesting colony at the Riverfront Park in Billings.  
**Western Meadowlark** – These birds would scurry off the sides of the prairie roads as we drove by.  
**Yellow-headed Blackbird** – Best looks were at the Broadview ponds.  
**Brewer's Blackbird** – We found these birds wandering aimlessly in the sagebrush flats.  
**Common Grackle** – Common and everywhere around Billings.  
**Brown-headed Cowbird** – Prairie = cattle = Cowbirds  
**Bullock's Oriole** – A female at an old homestead out on the prairie  
**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** – Two fly-bys as we looked at flocks of Black's.  
**Black Rosy-Finch** – Four flocks up on Beartooth of this gorgeous high elevation finch.  
**Cassin's Finch** – Best looks at the feeders in Red Lodge.  
**House Finch** – Common, but sporadic throughout the trip.  
**Red Crossbill** – Outstanding looks at the feeders in Red Lodge.  
**Pine Siskin** – Especially common feeding on dandelion in Red Rocks.  
**American Goldfinch** – A few individuals seen at the roadside rest on the way to Red Lodge.  
**House Sparrow** – Usually seen around eateries in the small towns we visited.

#### MAMMALS

**Snowshoe Hare** – We saw our first snowshoe at the Mammoth geyser basin.  
**White-tailed Jackrabbit** – Crossed the road as we drove by the railroad tracks in Billings.  
**Desert Cottontail** – We saw these rabbits along the Yellowstone River and on the prairie.  
**Mountain Cottontail** – Yellowstone had lots of these little guys, not uncommon.  
**Beaver** – One sitting on the bank during our float trip was very close.  
**Meadow Vole** – We saw lots of grass tunnels, but only a couple of individuals at Red Rock.  
**American Muskrat** – A single individual swimming to an island at Harriman was all we saw.  
**Eastern Gray Squirrel** – This exotic was seen at Two Moon Park.  
**Eastern Fox Squirrel** – We saw only one and that was at Two Moon Park.  
**Red Squirrel** – We saw a number of these, which are very similar to the west's Chickaree.  
**Uinta Ground Squirrel** – All over the national parks, aka "bear burritos".  
**Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel** – The easiest to see was on Beartooth Pass pullouts.  
**Richardson's Ground Squirrel** – All over the prairie.  
**Black-tailed Prairie Dog** – The dog town south and west of Molt, MT had hundreds.  
**Yellow-bellied Marmot** – These guys kept popping their heads up on high altitude rocks.  
**Least Chipmunk** – Very common in Yellowstone.  
**Red Fox** – We saw two individuals shedding their winter coat for their summer finery.  
**Coyote** – We saw lone individuals, but the den with four pups was the sweetest.  
**Gray Wolf** – A member of the Druid pack carrying an elk leg was stunning.  
**American Marten** – Bounding across the road in front of us was the only look.  
**Badger** – A female badger at her den with two young was very cool.  
**Black Bear** – Lots, but we really enjoyed the one that was trying to chase down the bison.  
**Grizzly Bear** – A silver animal with a dark brown hump was stunning.  
**Pronghorn** – Single individuals were first seen in the prairie north of Billings, with lots through the trip.  
**Bison** – Everywhere in Yellowstone a smattering in the Tetons.  
**Mountain Goat** – Females with kids were not uncommon on Barronette.  
**Bighorn Sheep** – A nice male east of Tower was only surpassed by the ewes with young at Calcite.  
**Moose** – One on the road by the visitor center and another on our raft trip.  
**Mule Deer** – Everywhere.  
**White-tailed Deer** – A few doe in the riparian along the Yellowstone were the first we saw.  
**Elk** – In herds scattered throughout both parks.