



YELLOWSTONE TRIP REPORT March 15 – 21, 2026



There's nothing more iconic than American Bison roaming the grasslands and hills of Yellowstone. We enjoyed watching these two as they crossed a small river. Photos in this report by (Steve Bird & Gina Nichol)



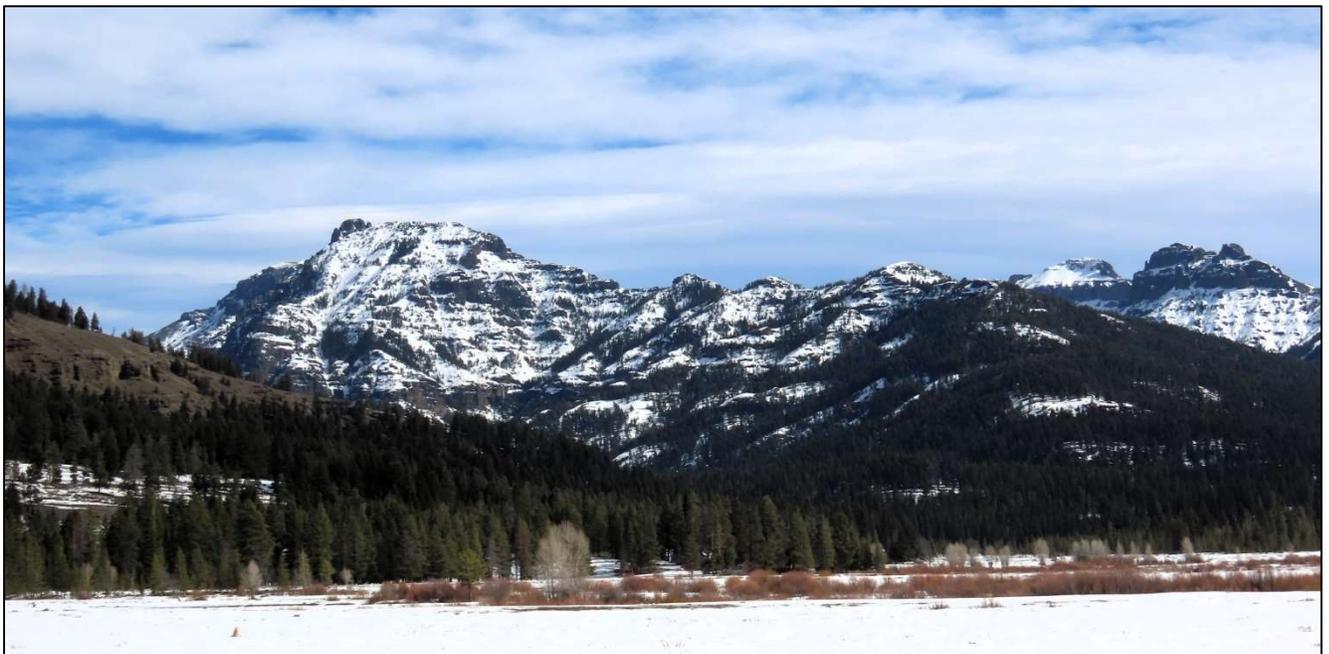
YELLOWSTONE

With Denver Holt

March 15 – 21, 2026

SUMMARY

Everyone arrived in Bozeman, Montana, either before or on the start day of the tour. We were met by a flurry of snow and wonderful views of the snow-covered mountains that surround the city. Our tour started with a visit to a nearby pond where we saw a variety of ducks and several birds of prey including up to 8 Bald Eagles. From here we set off towards our base for the tour in the sleepy town of Gardner by the northern gate to the famous Yellowstone National Park. Over the next 4 days we traversed the roads that took us across the northern section of this huge park. With both birds and mammals in our sights and a local guide that informed us of all the amazing history and geology of the park, we were set for a fantastic time. We were soon watching herds of American Bison, Pronghorn and good numbers of Elk, Mule Deer, and some White-tailed Deer. Of course, a real highlight was watching 15 Gray Wolves walking across an open meadow, and although distant, our views in scope were fabulous. Other mammals seen in smaller numbers included Mountain Goats, Bighorn Sheep, a lone Moose, Coyotes and some stunning Red Foxes. The birds were equally as exciting with multiple looks at Golden Eagles, including a pair that came so close we couldn't believe it! There were Barrow's Goldeneyes on the river as well as American Dipper. A displaying male Ruffed Grouse spotted by Carmelit was a treat, although the female that flew off didn't think so! With perseverance, Steve found a Three-toed Woodpecker which was seen well by everyone, this being one of the most difficult of all US woodpeckers to see. On one of the days, we visited some feeders where our hosts welcomed us with stories and a short film show. We enjoyed close views of Black Rosy-Finches, Clark's Nutcrackers, Canada and Steller's Jays, Pine Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, and some cute Red Squirrels. What a trip!! The scenery throughout was nothing short of magical and will leave a long-lasting memory for all of us.



Day 1 - We started with a short ride to Central Park Pond near Bozeman. Here we enjoyed a good variety of ducks and some Bald Eagles



A nice group of 4 Northern Pintail flew in and joined a drake Mallard



Four Pintail in flight and a lone Trumpeter Swan.



This group of Canvasback was appreciated by all of us, as this species is declining nationally.

Our first mammal of the tour was a Richardson's Ground Squirrel opposite the pond, and we also got good looks at the common Black-billed Magpie.



Moving on to the main event – Yellowstone National Park. We arrived and took our first look at the nearby Mammoth Hot Springs via the Roosevelt Arch entrance to the park.



We enjoyed a walk around the Mammoth Hot Springs with a detailed narration by Ashea of its history and geology. And our first good bird of Yellowstone was this Townsend's Solitaire.



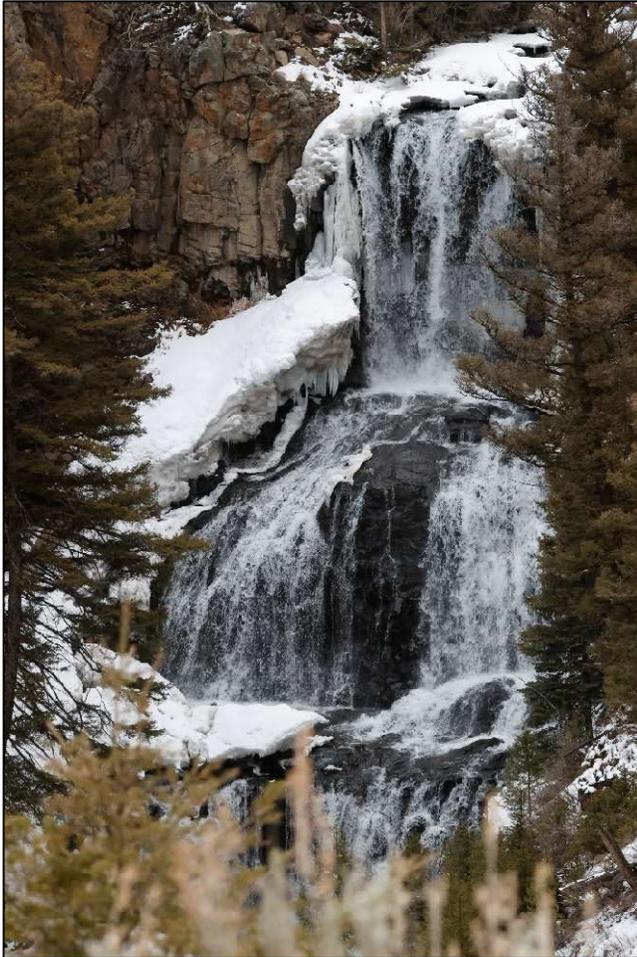
And here we have the Liberty Cap, a 37ft high dormant hot spring cone made of calcium carbonate. Behind it was our first entertaining group of American Bison.



The next day saw us enter the park and spend the whole day searching for wildlife. The American Bison became more and more familiar to us each day.



Icy waterfalls and lichen covered trees set the



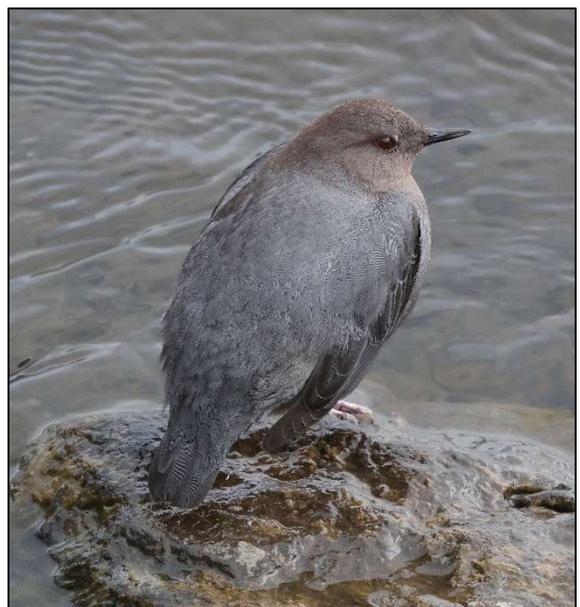
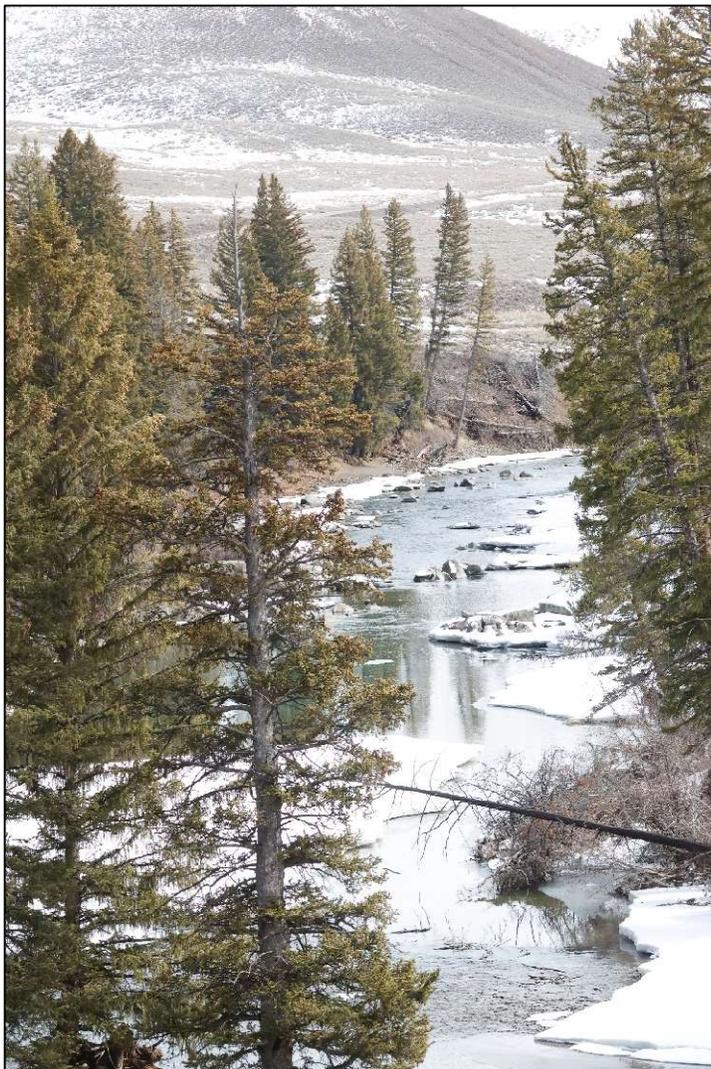
Bald Eagles were seen in many parts of the park.



A group of 3 Coyotes was a nice find and we enjoyed watching the antics of these very healthy-looking mini wolves!!



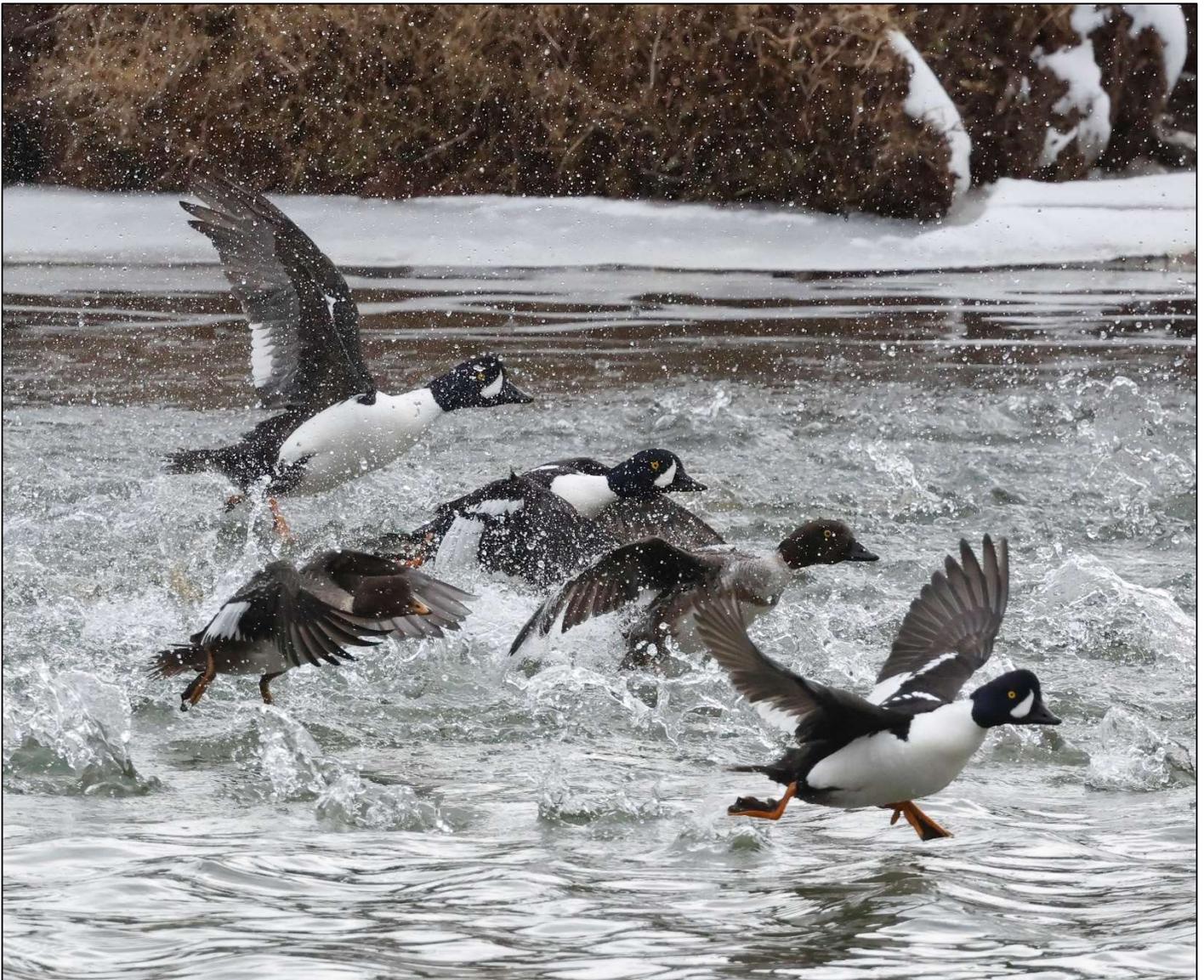
Looking up the beautiful river, we found a pair of American Dippers, singing and busily feeding along the river edge and under an ice shelf.



On the same river we watched a group of Barrow's Goldeneyes and found, an early Sagebrush Buttercup.



I like this shot of them taking off with all the water splashing around



And here is the great Denver Holt looking for the Wolf pack! We did see 15 of them walking across the valley, but a bit too distant for photos. Most were black wolves with a nice grey ghost in the middle.



And of course, we all got in the action and set our telescopes on the wolves! What a thrill !!



We stopped to admire the famous Lamar Valley, where Bison, Elk and Red Fox were seen.



Our next destination was a private house where we were warmly greeted by the owners and treated to outstanding views of a parade of good birds.

The Black Rosy Finch was a highlight, and we saw about 10 of these beauties. The accompanying Pine Siskins weren't quite as glamorous!



There was plenty more to see although we couldn't get enough of the Black Rosy Finches.



And you simply could not ask for better looks at the smart Clark's Nutcracker.



Another smart bird was this male Pine Grosbeak and we also got great views of several busy little Mountain Chickadees.



Steller's Jay sneaked around and fluffy looking Canada Jays would take bits of bread from your hand



Scanning the landscape yielded this herd of Mountain Goats.



On again and our next stop was when Carmelit spotted a Ruffed Grouse beside the road. We doubled back and enjoyed fabulous of this male displaying to a very unimpressed female that later flew off!
Further on, more Bighorn Sheep!



Mammals offered great views like this female Moose and of course more Bison.

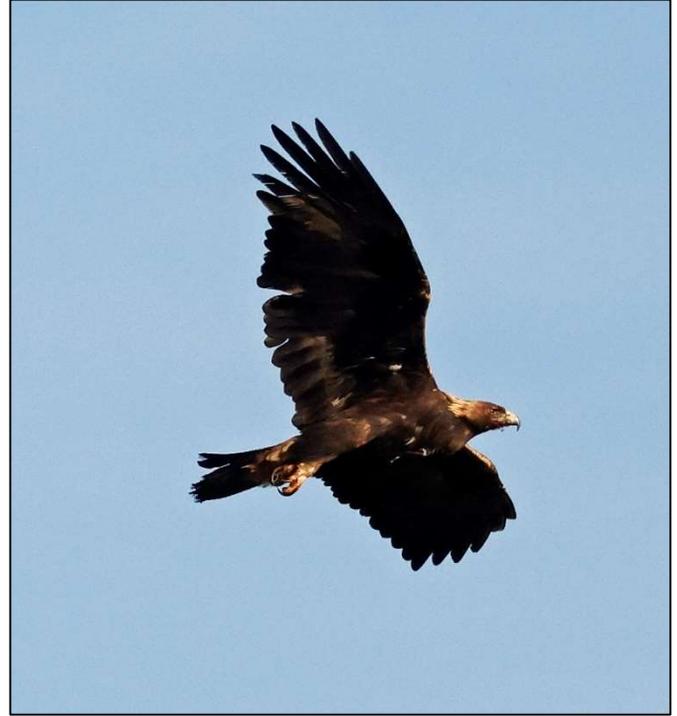


Several stunning Red Foxes were seen, all of which were in good shape and the brightest of orange!



And this American Three-toed Woodpecker took a good 25 minutes to locate as it quietly tapped at the base of some trees.

Our last evening saw a short trip to an area above town, and right on queue we got to see a pair of Golden Eagles that came so close we simply couldn't believe what we were seeing.



And then it was time to leave the park and head back to Bozeman. We waved goodbye to the Pronghorn and the ever-present Ravens.



As we headed back, we got great looks at several Horned Larks and views of an amazing geological feature called the 'Devil's Slide'.



And yes, there is always a finale on a Sunrise Birding Tour, and this pair of Golden Eagles soaring over the hillside in perfect light, was it!



Special thanks to Denver Holt, Ashea Mills, and Steve Bird for their efforts to make this tour a resounding success! And to our fabulous group, it was a pleasure sharing this adventure with you all!

SPECIES LIST YELLOWSTONE

March 15 – 21, 2026

| | Birds - Common Name (Scientific name) | # days seen | Highest count |
|-----|--|-------------|---------------|
| 1. | Canada Goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>) | 5 | 40 |
| 2. | Snow Goose (<i>Anser caerulescens</i>) | 1 | 5 |
| 3. | Trumpeter Swan (<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 4. | American Wigeon (<i>Mareca americana</i>) | 1 | 4 |
| 5. | Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) | 5 | 20 |
| 6. | Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) | 1 | 4 |
| 7. | Ring-necked Duck (<i>Aythya collaris</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 8. | Canvasback (<i>Aythya valisineria</i>) | 1 | 8 |
| 9. | Bufflehead (<i>Bucephala albeola</i>) | 1 | 12 |
| 10. | Common Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) | 1 | 10 |
| 11. | Barrow's Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala islandica</i>) | 4 | 18 |
| 12. | Hooded Merganser (<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>) | 1 | 4 |
| 13. | Common Merganser (<i>Mergus merganser</i>) | 3 | 10 |
| 14. | Ruffed Grouse (<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 15. | Rock Pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 16. | American Coot (<i>Fulica americana</i>) | 1 | 7 |
| 17. | Great Blue Heron (<i>Ardea herodias</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 18. | Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>) | 5 | 6 |
| 19. | Northern Harrier (<i>Circus hudsonius</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 20. | Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) | 5 | 8 |
| 21. | Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>) | 5 | 3 |
| 22. | Rough-legged Hawk (<i>Buteo lagopus</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 23. | Great Horned Owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 24. | Am Three-toed Woodpecker (<i>Picoides dorsalis</i>) | 1 | 1 |
| 25. | Northern Flicker (<i>Colaptes auratus</i>) | 1 | 3 |
| 26. | Canada Jay (<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 27. | Steller's Jay (<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>) | 1 | 3 |
| 28. | Black-billed Magpie (<i>Pica hudsonia</i>) | 5 | 20 |
| 29. | Clark's Nutcracker (<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>) | 3 | 4 |
| 30. | Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>) | 5 | 20 |
| 31. | American Crow (<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>) | 3 | 12 |
| 32. | Black-capped Chickadee (<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>) | 2 | 8 |
| 33. | Mountain Chickadee (<i>Poecile gambeli</i>) | 3 | 4 |
| 34. | Horned Lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>) | 1 | 10 |
| 35. | White-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 36. | Red-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta canadensis</i>) | 2 | 1 |
| 37. | American Dipper (<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>) | 2 | 4 |
| 38. | European Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>) | 5 | 25 |
| 39. | Townsend's Solitaire (<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>) | 3 | 5 |
| 40. | Mountain Bluebird (<i>Sialia currucoides</i>) | 3 | 8 |
| 41. | American Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>) | 5 | 8 |

| | | | |
|-----|---|---|----|
| 42. | House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>) | 2 | 6 |
| 43. | Song Sparrow (<i>Melospiza melodia</i>) | 2 | 4 |
| 44. | Pine Grosbeak (<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>) | 1 | 3 |
| 45. | Black Rosy-Finch (<i>Leucosticte atrata</i>) | 1 | 10 |
| 46. | House Finch (<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>) | 1 | 2 |
| 47. | Pine Siskin (<i>Spinus pinus</i>) | 4 | 15 |
| 48. | Western Meadowlark (<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>) | 2 | 3 |
| 49. | Red-winged Blackbird (<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>) | 2 | 4 |

| | Mammals - Common Name (Scientific name) | # days seen | Highest count |
|-----|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Red Squirrel (<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>) | 3 | 4 |
| 2. | Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>) | 3 | 7 |
| 3. | Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>) | 2 | 15 |
| 4. | Elk (<i>Cervus canadensis</i>) AKA Wapati | 5 | 60 |
| 5. | Mule Deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>) | 5 | 30 |
| 6. | White-tailed Deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>) | 3 | 4 |
| 7. | Moose (<i>Alces alces</i>) | 2 | 1 |
| 8. | Pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>) | 5 | 60 |
| 9. | American Bison (<i>Bison bison</i>) | 5 | 500 |
| 10. | Bighorn Sheep (<i>Ovis canadensis</i>) | 4 | 12 |
| 11. | Rocky Mountain Goat (<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>) | 1 | 5 |
| 12. | Red Fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>) | 2 | 3 |
| 13. | Mountain Cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>) | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | Richardson's Ground Squirrel (<i>Urocyon richardsonii</i>) | 1 | |

| | Other - Common Name (Scientific name) | # days seen | Highest count |
|----|---|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Milbert's Tortoiseshell (<i>Aglais milberti</i>) | 2 | 5 |
| 2. | Sagebrush Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus glaberrimus</i>) | 2 | 10 |



Richardson's Ground Squirrel and Sagebrush Buttercup



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