



MONTANA & YELLOWSTONE WITH CASSIA CROSSBILL EXTENSION

JUNE 24-JULY 1, 2021

Tour leaders: Josh Engel & Nathan Goldberg

IN COLLABORATION WITH MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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This trip takes place in one of the truly spectacular parts of the country, where we wind our way through prairies, across mountains, along rivers, and through sagebrush. Every day brings new habitats and new birds, all in stunning scenery. After a forced hiatus thanks to covid-19 in 2020, we were thrilled to be back in the American West. This was the second of back-to-back trips that we ran here, which meant that we had just scouted the whole area! The birding would already have been incredible even without that, but having just run another trip here, it made finding the birds that much more efficient. We started in Bozeman, where we found Calliope Hummingbird and American Dipper, among many other western birds. Heading into the short-grass prairies, we found the full suite of prairie birds--Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Thick-billed and Chestnut-collared Longspur, Mountain Plover (it took no small amount of searching!), and more. We even bumped into Gray Partridge in the prairie. The mountains provided Black Rosy Finch right at a spectacular mountain pass. Forests lower down revealed Williamson's Sapsucker and Evening Grosbeak. The sagebrush gave us a huge bonus when Nathan spotted a Greater Sage-Grouse. Wetlands were productive, too, even giving us another Nathan-spotted bonus, a Eurasian Wigeon. The extension came through for us as well, with stunning views of Cassia Crossbill and Flammulated Owl, along with a variety of western birds at the northern edge of their range.

Of course we had a great group (all from Maryland) to enjoy the whole thing with in a region bustling with activity as it emerged from the covid pandemic. It was a pleasure to be traveling again!

Rather than a full trip report, see the annotated trip list below for highlights and details.

Top 5 Birds as voted by the group (main tour only)

1. Williamson's Sapsucker
2. Lazuli Bunting
3. Sage Grouse
4. Black Rosy Finch
5. Calliope Hummingbird



BIRD LIST. 175 species (including 5 heard only and 2 leader only). Taxonomy follows the Clements/eBird Checklist, 2019 update. Former (or alternate) English names are in parentheses. (heard) = heard only; (leader) = tour leader only. (E)=Extension only, (E)*=drive back to Bozeman after the extension only (something of an “extension to the extension”). The global IUCN red list status is listed for threatened and near-threatened species: CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near-threatened.

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Trumpeter Swan

Cygnus buccinator

Blue-winged Teal

Spatula discors

Cinnamon Teal

Spatula cyanoptera

Northern Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Eurasian Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Great spotting by Nathan in a large group of American Wigeon

American Wigeon

Mareca americana

Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>
Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>

We got lucky when one popped up in a river in Yellowstone as we were passing by

Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>
California Quail (E)	<i>Callipepla californica</i>

We found a pair in a neighborhood on the edge of Twin Falls

Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Gray Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>

After a participant saw one in Bozeman, we were thrilled to find another pair in Harlowton

Greater Sage-Grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>
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Great looks at a female that Nathan spotted along a dirt road near the Pryor Mountains

Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>
Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>
Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Common Poorwill (heard)	<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>
Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>
Calliope Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus calliope</i>
Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>
American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>
Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>

We worked hard first to find one--which Nathan spotted--then worked even harder to get everyone on it as it sat camouflaged in the grass far across a pasture

Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>
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Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>
Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>
Franklin's Gull (E)*	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>
Ring-billed Gull (E)	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
California Gull (E)	<i>Larus californicus</i>
Forster's Tern (E)*	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>
American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
White-faced Ibis (E)	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Saw one eating a mammal, probably a ground squirrel, near Harlowton	
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>
Sharp-shinned Hawk (leader)	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
A family of three was in the prairie north of Harlowton	
Flammulated Owl (E)	<i>Psiloscops flammeolus</i>
Incredible views of one high in the South Hills of Idaho.	
Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>
Northern Saw-whet Owl (heard)	<i>Aegolius acadicus</i>
Williamson's Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i>
We found a pair attending a nest while we ate lunch in Yellowstone	
Red-naped Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>
Lewis's Woodpecker (E)	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>
Lovely views of this most unusual woodpecker in Idaho	
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>
Hairy Woodpecker (E)	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
Peregrine Falcon (leader)	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>
Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>
Willow Flycatcher (heard)	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>
Hammond's Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax hammondii</i>

Gray Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>
Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>
Cordilleran Flycatcher (E)	<i>Empidonax occidentalis</i>
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>
Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>
Loggerhead Shrike - NT	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>
Canada Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (E)*	<i>Aphelocoma woodhouseii</i>
Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica hudsonia</i>
Clark's Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>
Nice views at a viewpoint in the Beartooth Mountains	
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>
Juniper Titmouse (E)*	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>
Nice views in Idaho as a few of us drove back to Bozeman at the end of the trip	
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
Bushtit (E)*	<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i>
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Marsh Wren (heard) (E)*	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>
American Dipper	<i>Cinclus mexicanus</i>
Nice views of a pair attending a nest in Bozeman were the only ones seen all trip	
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
Sage Thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>
Mountain Bluebird	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>
Townsend's Solitaire	<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>
Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>

Swainson's Thrush (heard)	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Sprague's Pipit - VU	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>
Great views in the prairie north of Harlowton	
Evening Grosbeak - VU	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>
Black Rosy-Finch - EN	<i>Leucosticte atrata</i>
Excellent views of a pair feeding at the edge of a snow patch in the Beartooth Mountains	
House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>
Cassin's Finch	<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
Cassia Crossbill (E)	<i>Loxia sinesciuris</i>
Tremendous views of a large flock in the South Hills, one of only two small mountain ranges where this recently described species occurs	
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>
Lesser Goldfinch (E)	<i>Spinus psaltria</i>
American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>
Chestnut-collared Longspur - VU	<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>
The longspurs (both species) near Harlowton are always a trip highlight	
McCown's Longspur	<i>Rhynchophanes mccownii</i>
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>
Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>
Lark Bunting	<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>
Fox Sparrow (E)	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>
Sagebrush Sparrow	<i>Artemisiospiza nevadensis</i>
Nice views in the sagebrush at the base of the Pryor Mountains	
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Baird's Sparrow	<i>Centronyx bairdii</i>
It took a bit of work for everyone to see this secretive species, but eventually we all got good views	
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>
Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>

Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>
Bullock's Oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i>
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>
Common Grackle - NT	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>
Virginia's Warbler (E)*	<i>Leiothlypis virginiae</i>
MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Geothlypis tolmiei</i>
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>
Black-throated Gray Warbler (E)*	<i>Setophaga nigrescens</i>
Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>
We didn't find them until the last day of the main trip, but we got great views once we did	
Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i>

MAMMAL LIST. Combined list for main tour and extension. 20 species. As there is no standardized list of English mammal names, the names used here are ones in common usage (alternate names are in parentheses). (heard) = heard only; (leader) = tour leader only. The global IUCN red list status is listed for threatened and near-threatened species: CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near-threatened.

Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>
Brief views by only a couple of people in Yellowstone	
American Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>
It was a real Yellowstone scene where these bears were, with a large crowd gathered, but those participants who stuck it out had good views	
Grizzly (Brown) Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
An adult with cubs on a distant hillside in Yellowstone	
Pronghorn (Antelope)	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>
American Bison	<i>Bison bison</i>
Mountain Goat	<i>Oreamnos americanus</i>
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
Elk	<i>Cervus canadensis</i>
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>
White-tailed Deer	<i>Odoceileus virginianus</i>
Desert Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>

Golden Mantled Ground Squirrel

Black-tailed Prairie Dog

Yellow-bellied Marmot

Uinta Chipmunk

Red Squirrel (heard)

Uinta Ground Squirrel

Richardson's Ground Squirrel

Piute Ground Squirrel (E)

Muskrat

North American Porcupine (E)

Callospermophilus lateralis

Cynomys ludovicianus

Marmota flaviventris

Neotamias umbrinus

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Urocitellus armatus

Urocitellus richardsonii

Urocitellus mollis

Ondatra zibethicus

Erethizon dorsatum

Great views of one as we looked for owls at night in Twin Falls



Thick-billed Longspur bringing food to its nest. Photo by Evelyn Ralston.



Baird's Sparrow doing the Baird's Sparrow thing. Photo by Evelyn Ralston.



Sagebrush Sparrow. Photo by Nathan Goldberg.



Cassia Crossbill. Photo by Nathan Goldberg.



Flammulated Owl. Photo by Nathan Goldberg.