# NORTHWESTERN COLORADO BIRD NOTES

### By EDWARD R. WARREN

T HE last of March, 1907, the writer went to Sulphur Springs, Grand County, Colorado, for the purpose of collecting, mammals being, as usual, my specialty. I remained there until May 7, collecting in that vicinity; and on that date, with Mr. J. W. Frey as assistant, I started on a week's trip to Grand Lake, 28 miles from Sulphur Springs, and farther back in the mountains. We returned to Sulphur Springs, and on the 16th of May Frey and myself started out on the route shown on the accompanying map. We had a covered wagon and pair of horses, and camp outfit, so that we were pretty independent. Altogether we drove about 650 miles, exclusive of the Grand Lake trip, and thru all sorts of country,



NORTHWESTERN CORNER OF COLORADO, SHOWING ROUTE TRAVERSED BY E. R. WARREN Published by permission of Clason Map Company of Denver

and were at various elevations, from 5374 feet at Newcastle, to 12,000 feet and over near our Boreas Pass camp on the Continental Divide.

As would be expected over such a route, there was great difference in the physical and biological characters in different portions. Sulphur Springs has an elevation of 7,665 feet, situated in the Middle Park, a rolling well-watered tract just at the west edge of the foothills of the Continental Divide. Some of the hills are quite well timbered, especially on the north slopes, tho the trees are not large. They are mostly pines; quaking aspens are also common. There is much sage-brush in the open country. Grand Lake is more in the mountains, at an elevation of 8,300 feet. The lake is two or three miles long, and a mile or more wide, with thickly timbered hills coming down to its very edge all about. There is a small town here, and it is quite a summer resort in a small way.

Going west from Sulphur Springs our route kept us mostly at the higher alti-

tudes as far as collecting was concerned, until we got to Yarmany Creek, near McCoy, in the cedar and pinyon belt, at 6,800 feet. Thence we crossed into Egeria Park, and went on to Yampa, 7,700 feet. From here on, as long as we followed the Bear River Valley, we gradually reached lower elevations, until at Snake River, seven miles above its confluence with the Bear, we were at 5,850 feet, in a dry desert country with sage brush and chico in abundance. From here we went to Douglas Spring, fifteen miles farther, and in the cedars and pinyons again at 6,700 feet. We went there especially for the Utah Chipmunk (*Eutamias dorsalis utah.ensis*), which comes into this portion of the state only. The Colorado range of three other species of small mammals, namely, *Eutamias minimus, Callospermophilus wortmani*, and *Neotoma cinnamomea*, is restricted, so far as at present known, to this northwest corner. These are all pale, arid land forms.

From Douglas Spring we back-tracked to the Snake, and then went down it to the Bear River, at Lily P. O., at Mr. F. C. Barnes' ranch, where we camped twenty-four hours, and then ferried the outfit across the Bear in rowboats: rather a strenuous undertaking, as the wagon had to be unloaded, body and top lifted off, wheels taken off, and the whole thing torn apart generally, and then everything put together again on the other side; but all was taken across safely, and the horses made to swim, which they did in good shape. Later in the season we could have forded, but were in too great a hurry to wait for the river to run down. We camped that night among the willows and mosquitos, especially mosquitos.

It was a dry drive from Lily to Meeker, 60 miles, only two or three watering places along the road until we got close to the latter place. From Meeker on we usually had plenty of water, sometimes too much, when it rained. The valleys of the White, Grand and lower Eagle Rivers are quite similar and, what one usually finds in western Colorado, fertile lands, but where not cultivated and irrigated covered with much sagebrush, hills sloping down on either side, with aspens on the lower slopes, and pines or spruces above.

For certain reasons I wished to go by way of Breckenridge, and hoped to cross from Red Cliff to Ten Mile Creek, and then it was but a little way to Breckenridge. But we found by inquiry that this road, if not impassable, would be at best a pretty tough proposition. So, instead of taking that route, we drove over Tennessee Pass to Leadville, then turned back and crossed Fremont Pass to the Pacific Slope again, thence down the Ten Mile and up the Blue to Breckenridge. And then we crossed the Continental Divide once more at Boreas Pass. The airline distance between Tennessee and Boreas Passes is only about 18 miles; but we traveled several times that between them. From Boreas it was down thru the South Park country, and over the Hayden Divide, and then thru the Ute Pass to Colorado Springs and home, on August 12. The life zones traversed covered everything from the Upper Sonoran to the Alpine.

During all this time I devoted myself practically exclusively to mammals, and birds were but a side issue, not many being collected. If we had looked more for birds I have no doubt but that this list would be much longer. The early part of the season was cold and stormy; it was not until the end of the first week in June that we had really good settled weather. The migrations seemed late, tho my notes on that subject are not of much value; traveling as we did from the higher to the lower altitudes during the migrating season, we were moving in a contrary direction to the migrants, and usually stopping for only a few days at each place, but little could be told as to the birds' movements.

I wish to acknowledge here my appreciation of Mr. Frey's services. Tho his special duties were to look after the team and camp outfit, and to see that we had

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1. Colymbus nigricollis californicus. Eared Grebe. Common at Grand Lake, May 10-12.

2. Hydrochelidon nigra surinamensis. Black Tern. Seen June 1, flying about over the meadows along Bear River, five miles above Steamboat Springs. A dozen or fifteen were seen.

3. Merganser americanus. American Merganser. A duck we supposed to be of this species was seen on Bear River, near Steamboat Springs, June 6 and 8.

4. Fulica americana. American Coot. One or two seen on Grand Lake, May 10.

5. Phalaropus lobatus. Northern Phalarope. June first I killed one on a little branch of Oak Creek, about 8 miles above Steamboat Springs. It seems rather a late date for the bird to be there as it does not breed in Colorado.

6. Ardea candidissima. Snowy Heron. One was seen on a bar in Grand River, near Kremmling, May 17.

7. Porzana carolina. Sora. One was caught in a trap set for muskrats, in a slough at Lay. At that date, June 17, it was no doubt breeding there.

8. Actitis macularia. Spotted Sandpiper. Seen practically everywhere we went that there were any streams or water. A nest and eggs were found at Lily, Routt County, June 30.

9. Oxyechus vociferus. Killdeer. The first one was seen May 12, on Stillwater Creek, between Sulphur Springs and Grand Lake. After that seen pretty much everywhere we went.

10. Dendragapus obscurus. Dusky Grouse. Seen at Sulphur Springs, and near our camp at Sheephorn Pass, in Grand County.

11. Lagopus leucurus altipetens. Southern White-tailed Ptarmigan. Only one was seen during the trip, while we were at Boreas Pass; in fact this was the only time we were in a locality inhabited by them.

12. Centrocerus urophasianus. Sage Grouse. Seen in the vicinity of Sulphur Springs during my stay there. June 14 we saw a hen with three chicks about two weeks old, about 8 miles west of Craig. The next day, at Lay, we saw another hen and three young, the latter being much larger than those seen the previous day. July 5, I saw well grown young near Meeker. The bird is quite numerous in some localities.

13. Zenaidura carolinensis. Mourning Dove. First seen May 12, at Stillwater Creek, between Grand Lake and Sulphur Springs. After that seen everywhere. Nests and eggs found at Craig, June 12-13, and one nest and eggs near Douglas Spring, June 27.

14. Cathartes aura. Turkey Buzzard. Seen near Craig, at Sand Creek, and Snake River, Routt County; and near Meeker.

15. Circus hudsonius. Marsh Hawk. Not as many seen as one would expect, and these were mostly at various places in Routt County. The only other locality was Mud Springs, Garfield County, on the White River Plateau.

16. Buteo borealis calurus. Western Red-tailed Hawk. Seen at Sulphur Springs March 29. After that they were seen more or less frequently everywhere we went.

17. Aquila chrysaetos. Golden Eagle. Seen at Yampa, Oak Creek, below Steamboat Springs, and on Snake River, all in Routt County; and one at White

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Rock about 12 miles above Meeker. Probably fairly common thru most of the region traversed.

18. Falco sparverius. Sparrow Hawk. First seen at Sulphur Springs April 20, after that common everywhere.

19. Bubo virginianus pallescens. Western Horned Owl. One seen sixteen miles below Steamboat Springs, and two near Mud Springs.

20. Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa. Burrowing Owl. During the whole trip, and in spite of the fact that we passed thru numerous prairie dog towns, we saw but two burrowing owls, which were seen June 17, in a deserted dog town about halfway between Lay and Sand Creek, Routt County.

**21. Ceryle alcyon.** Belted Kingfisher. First seen at Sulphur Springs April 30; after that seen here and there along the Grand and Bear Rivers, and also on the Eagle River.

22. Sphyrapicus varius nuchalis. Red-naped Sapsucker. One taken at Grand Lake, May 10.

23. Melanerpes erythrocephalus. Red-headed Woodpecker. A male seen June 10, about five miles below Steamboat Springs.

24. Melanerpes torquatus. Lewis Woodpecker. Seen on Oak Creek, above Steamboat Springs; at several points between the latter place and Craig; and one at Green Mountain Falls, at the very end of the trip.

25. Colaptes cafer collaris. Red-shafted Flicker. First seen at Sulphur Springs, March 29, and were common by April 3. We saw them everywhere we went. I saw one near Boreas Pass at about 12,000 feet elevation.

26. Phalænoptilus nuttallii. Poorwill. Two were collected at Craig. Their notes were heard in the evening at various places along our route.

27. Chordeiles virginianus henryi. Western Nighthawk. Seen frequently from Steamboat Springs to the end of the trip.

28. Selasphorus platycercus. Broad-tailed Hummingbird. Three males of this species were taken, two near McCoy, and one at Steamboat Springs. Hummingbirds were frequently seen, but these were the only ones collected. At Steamboat Springs, June 8, we saw a female hummer at work building a nest, just begun and placed in small overhanging limbs of a cottonwood tree, close to the trunk.

29. Tyrannus tyrannus. Eastern Kingbird. Seen ten miles above Steamboat Springs, below Hayden, at Craig, and near Lay, all in Routt County.

**30.** Tyrannus verticalis. Western Kingbird. First seen May 16, between Sulphur Springs and Kremmling. After that date they were seen frequently during the whole trip. June 13, Frey found near Craig a nest with five well feathered young in a little cavity near the top of one of the low adobe bluffs along Fortification Creek. At Hiner and Jones' ranch, Big Beaver Creek, near Buford, Rio Blanco County, there was a nest with young only a few days old on the end of the ridgepole of the cabin we camped in. It is quite possible some of the birds seen may have been *T. vociferans*; as none were collected there was, of course, a chance for mistakes in identification, but I think there is little doubt that the great majority were *verticalis*.

31. Myiarchus cinerascens. Ash-throated Flycatcher. Several were seen at Douglas Spring; and one was seen near Dotsero, Garfield County.

**32.** Sayornis saya. Say Phoebe. First seen at Sulphur Springs April 25. It was seen here and there during the trip, but not as often as one would have expected.

33. Contopus richardsonii. Western Wood Pewee. Seen at Steamboat Springs, and between there and Craig.

34. Otocoris alpestris leucolæma. Desert Horned Lark. Seen at various places

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during the trip, in the open country; also seen above timberline, near Boreas Pass, at 12,000 feet.

**35.** Pica pica hudsonica. Magpie. Seen about everywhere we went, except on Boreas Pass. At Oak Creek, Routt County, we found a nest with four young, apparently about eighteen days old.

36. Cyanocitta stelleri diademata. Long-crested Jay. This species was not seen as often as one would expect. It was seen at Grand Lake, and at various points between Sulphur Springs and Steamboat Springs, and not seen again until we were coming up Eagle River, below Tennessee Pass. From Leadville to Colorado Springs it was seen at many places except at the highest altitudes.

37. Aphelocoma woodhouseii. Woodhouse Jay. Observed at the following points: near McCoy; Snake River, above Lily; Douglas Spring; near Newcastle and Glenwood Springs; Eagle, and Allenton.

38. Perisoreus canadensis capitalis. Rocky Mountain Jay. Seen, of course, only at the higher elevations. One was seen at Sulphur Springs; several near Sheephorn Pass; at Mud Springs, July 13, where they were moulting; near Kokomo; and at Boreas Pass, August 2-5, still moulting.

**39**. **Corvus corax sinuatus.** American Raven. Noted at various places in Grand, Routt, and Rio Blanco Counties.

**40.** Nucifraga columbiana. Clarke Nutcracker. Seen at Sulphur Springs; near Sheephorn Pass; Breckenridge; Michigan Creek, below Jefferson; and at Florissant. It is a bird which seems to be rather local in its distribution in Colorado.

41. Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus. Pinyon Jay. Seen at a few places in or near the cedar and pinyon belts as follows: near McCoy; Snake River, a few miles above Lily; Douglas Spring; White River, below Big Beaver Creek; and 12 miles above Glenwood Springs, in the Grand River canyon.

42. Dolichonyx oryzivorus. Bobolink. As we were driving along one of the toughest roads I ever got onto, about five miles above Steamboat Springs, I saw several birds in the road and on the fences alongside which I did not at first recognize, then suddenly realized they were Bobolinks, a bird that I had not seen for many a year, as they are rare and local in Colorado. Here were ten or a dozen of them, both sexes, and a male was secured as evidence that I was not mistaken. This was June first; on the eighth we saw more in a meadow one and one-half or two miles below Steamboat Springs, and judging from their actions they had not yet finished mating. On the tenth we saw some in the Elk River Valley, about ten miles below Steamboat Springs. Mr. F. H. Hopkins, in Auk, Vol. 23, p. 461, 1906, reports them as breeding near Meeker, Rio Blanco County.

43. Molothrus ater. Cowbird. Seen at many places along our route, and practically from one end to the other.

44. Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus. Yellow-headed Blackbird. Seen only in a few places: between Sulphur Springs and Kremmling; a few miles above Steamboat Springs; 15 miles below Steamboat Springs; and near Gypsum a single male was seen with a flock of Cowbirds and Brewer Blackbirds.

45. Agelaius phœniceus. Redwinged Blackbird. Noted frequently in suitable locations.

46. Sturnella neglecta. Western Meadowlark. Observed nearly everywhere, the for some reason we did not notice any along the Grand and Eagle Rivers.

47. Icterus bullocki. Bullock Oriole. Seen only at Steamboat Springs and a few miles below that place. It seems strange that we did not see more of them, but that

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is partly accounted for by the fact that at many places we were away from trees such as they like.

**48. Euphagus cyanocephalus.** Brewer Blackbird. I saw the first at Sulphur Springs May 1. After that they were seen everywhere we went and were usually very common. Nests and eggs were found at Steamboat Springs June 1 to 8.

**49.** Carpodacus cassini. Cassin Finch. Seen at Grand Lake; near Sheephorn Pass; at Douglas Spring; at Mud Springs; and at Boreas Pass.

**50.** Leucosticte atrata. Black Leucosticte. One was seen April 6 at Sulphur Springs in company with a large flock of Juncos. It was storming and snowing at the time.

**51.** Leucosticte australis. Brown-capped Leucosticte. Seen only at Boreas Pass, in early August.

52. Acanthis linaria. Redpoll. April 14, I saw four at Sulphur Springs.

**53.** Astragalinus tristis. Goldfinch. One or two seen with flocks of Pine Linnets several miles below Steamboat Springs, and also, if I remember correctly, near McCov.

54. Spinus pinus. Pine Linnet. Observed usually in flocks, at various places from Sulphur Springs to Hayden; at Mud Springs; Allenton; Minturn; Breckenridge and Boreas Pass.

**55. Poœcetes gramineus confinis.** Western Vesper Sparrow. Seen first at Sulphur Springs April 26; after that they were seen everywhere, and were common.

56. Passer domesticus. English Sparrow. These nuisances were seen at the following places: Sulphur Springs (only a few); near McCoy; Yampa; Steamboat Springs; Hayden; Meeker; Glenwood Springs; Eagle; Wolcott; and Jefferson.

57. Chondestes grammacus strigatus. Western Lark Sparrow. Seen at only a few places: near the lower bridge over Snake River, and between there and Lily; near Wolcott; near Pando Station, on Eagle River, 9,200 feet; and near Florissant. This is another bird which should have been seen more frequently.

**58.** Zonotrichia leucophrys. White-crowned Sparrow. First one seen at Sulphur Springs May 2. Thence it was seen along the road until about 15 miles below Steamboat Springs. It was not seen again until we got up toward the head of Eagle River. At Boreas Pass many were seen among the dwarf spruces at timberline, 12,000 feet, and some acted as if they had nests or young about, tho I could find none. This was on August 4.

59. Spizella socialis arizonæ. Western Chipping Sparrow. Seen at many places between McCoy and the end of the trip.

**60.** Spizella breweri. Brewer Sparrow. First seen near Craig, and thence between that place and Meeker. An inhabitant of the sage brush plains, and fairly common where found.

61. Junco hyemalis connectens. Intermediate Junco. One seen March 30 at Sulphur Springs.

62. Junco mearnsi. Pink-sided Junco. Seen at Sulphur Springs at various times between April 2 and May 5.

63. Junco caniceps. Gray-headed Junco. At Sulphur Springs, on my arrival, this was by far the most common Junco. Besides Sulphur Springs it was also seen at Grand Lake; Sheephorn Pass; near summit of pass going down into Egeria Park; near Steamboat Springs; at Red Cliff; Breckenridge; Boreas Pass; Tarryall Creek; and Green Mountain Falls.

64. Melospiza cinerea montana. Mountain Song Sparrow. Noted at Sulphur Springs; near McCoy; Vampa; between Hayden and Craig; Eagle and Allenton.
65. Pipilo maculatus megalonyx. Spurred Towhee. Seen near lower bridge

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over Snake River; near Douglas Spring; at Lily; and on Elk Creek, above Newcastle.

66. Oreospiza chlorura. Green-tailed Towhee. First seen May 11, near Grand Lake. Observed practically everywhere between Sulphur Springs and Craig, and then not noted again until we got to Douglas Spring. It was seen along the road between Lily and Meeker, and from there on at various points.

67. Zamelodia melanocephala. Black-headed Grosbeak. Seen on Oak Creek; at Steamboat Springs; Hayden; Lily and Allenton.

68. Cyanospiza amœna. Lazuli Bunting. Seen at Meeker; near Glenwood Springs, and twelve miles above the latter place.

69. Calamospiza melanocorys. Lark Bunting. Observed at Yampa and above Steamboat Springs; we were told of them near Craig, and our informant said they were the first he had ever seen there, and he had lived there nine years; at Lay on June 15-16 they were still mating, at least each of us at different times saw two males pursuing a female. They were seen at Sand Creek. After that no more were seen until we neared Florissant, when we saw a mixed flock, males, females and young.

**70. Piranga ludoviciana.** Western Tanager. Seen near McCoy; at Steamboat Springs; Douglas Springs; and below Minturn.

71. Progne subis. Purple Martin. Several were seen flying about at Mud Springs, on the White River Plateau, 8,850 feet, and also on the West Fork of Elk Creek, about eight miles above Newcastle. Messrs. Cross and Baker told me that the Martin was to be found about Glenwood Springs. The bird is very locally distributed in Colorado.

72. Petrochelidon lunifrons. Cliff Swallow. No Cliff Swallows were seen until we passed Craig, and thence we saw them here and there all along the road, often very abundantly. A large colony was nesting under the lower bridge over Snake River.

73. Hirundo erythrogaster. Barn Swallow. This species was seen at only a few places, viz: eight miles below Hayden; at Lay; and at Florissant. But it is no doubt much more abundant thru the territory traversed than this would seem to indicate.

74. Tachycineta thalassina lepida. Violet-green Swallow. First of the season seen at Grand Lake May 12. Thence more or less common everywhere we went.

75. Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides. White-rumped Shrike. For some reason we only saw this bird on two occasions, between Sulphur Springs and Grand Lake, May 11: and at Kremmling, May 16.

76. Dendroica æstiva. Yellow Warbler. First seen near Yampa, May 26. Thence it was seen nearly everywhere we went, and was quite common.

77. Dendroica auduboni. Audubon Warbler. Seen at comparatively few localities, but that was because much of our route was at a lower elevation than the birds' breeding range. It was seen at Sheephorn Pass; Yampa; Steamboat Springs and a few miles below; and at Douglas Spring.

78. Icteria virens longicauda. Long-tailed Chat. There were numbers about the thick willows on the south side of the Bear River at Lily, and they were also seen at Allenton.

79. Anthus pensilvanicus. American Pipit. Seen near Spitzer's about twelve miles above Sulphur Springs, May 13. In spite of the fact that there were several inches of new snow on the ground at the time, and still snowing, the birds were taking a bath in a little stream which the road crossed. The species was also seen at timber-line at Boreas Pass.

80. Cinclus mexicanus. Water Ouzel. Seen at a number of places along the streams at the higher elevations.

81. Oroscoptes montanus. Sage Thrasher. Seen at Yampa. They were common on the sagebrush plains about Lay, and thence to Douglas Spring, and from there to Meeker. Near the lower bridge over Snake River, on June 22, we found a nest with five eggs.

82. Mimus polyglottos. Mockingbird. Frey shot one May 23, at Yarmany Creek, near McCoy, altitude 6,800 feet. This seems to me rather an unusual record for the bird.

83. Galeoscoptes carolinensis. Catbird. Seen at lower bridge, on Snake River, and at Allenton.

84. Salpinctes obsoletus. Rock Wren. Seen at various places where the country was suited to its habits.

85. Troglodytes aedon aztecus. Western House Wren. The first one was seen May 18, near Sheephorn Pass, 8,200 feet. Seen at many places after that. At Steamboat Springs we had a most interesting experience with a pair. We stopped at that place from the first until the tenth of June. On the morning of the fourth I discovered a lot of twigs in the jockeybox of the wagon, which had been

left open over night, and soon a wren appeared with another stick and added it to the collection. The wagon stood about parallel with and 12 feet from one side of the tent, and about midway between the front end of the wagon and the rear end of the tent was an aspen tree. We nailed an empty fruit can to the tree in such fashion that there was only a small entrance hole. Then threw the sticks out of the jockeybox, closed it, and awaited developments. The birds

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HOUSE WREN ABOUT TO ENTER HER NEST

came back and investigated, and presently began to build in the can. They did not utilize any of the stuff we had thrown out, but brought new. Once they, or the female, threw everything out of the can, and began all over again. They worked daily until we left, but seemed to do most of their work early in the morning. I often heard the male singing at daylight, apparently right over the tent. When we left the can was full of sticks, but the birds were still working. As we were suspicious characters the town marshal had been a daily visitor at our camp, and on our departure we left the nest under his special charge, and he promised to ''make it hot for any kid who monkeyed with it.'' I have never heard if they raised a family or not.

86. Sitta carolinensis aculeata. Slender-billed Nuthatch. Seen only at Douglas Spring, and on Tarryall Creek, but should be in other localities.

87. Sitta pygmæa. Pigmy Nuthatch. Seen at Sulphur Spring; near McCoy; at Douglas Spring; and near Florissant. Should be at other places we visited, but we did not happen to see them.

88. Parus inornatus griseus. Gray Titmouse. Frey saw a small flock at Douglas Spring.

89. Parus gambeli. Mountain Chickadee. Observed at Sulphur Springs; Grand Lake; near McCoy; at Douglas Spring; and on Tarryall Creek. As in the case of the nuthatches, they should have been seen elsewhere.

90. Regulus calendula. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Seen only at Sulphur Springs.

91. Myadestes townsendii. Townsend Solitaire. Noted a number of times at Sulphur Springs and Grand Lake; near Kremmling and near Sheephorn Pass. After that we were out of their summer range, until we struck the Continental Divide, and did not happen to run across any then.

92. Merula migratoria propinqua. Western Robin. Robins were at Sulphur



SITE OF HOUSE WREN'S NEST-IN TIN CAN NAILED TO TREE AT LEFT

Springs on my arrival there; during the stormy weather in April they gathered at times in large flocks, 75 or more. They were noted everywhere along our route. At Steamboat Springs, June 1-10, we found nests with eggs and young. July 12 we found at Mud Springs a nest with four eggs.

93. Sialia arctica. Mountain Bluebird. The Bluebirds were at Sulphur Springs when I arrived. About the middle of April their actions indicated that if they were not already nesting they were seriously considering doing so. They were seen everywhere we went on the trip.

Colorado Springs, Colorado.