



Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Greater Sage-grouse

Colorado Landfowl Prowl

7 Nights/8 Days

Colorado is home to sweeping mountainous vistas, vast rollicking prairies, sundrenched valleys, and Great Sage-Plains. Within these iconic landscapes occurs a delicate, elaborate, and delightfully bizarre ancient natural ritual: Galliformes dancing on their “leks” in the hopes of impressing a mate.

Join tour leader Brandon Lentz on an intimate journey through The Centennial State in search of every Landfowl species that call Colorado home. The tour will take us through every aforementioned landscape that this gem of the American West has to offer, each with its own unique ecosystem to explore as we seek out Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Dusky Grouse and all the other avian wonders along our route.

Tour Overview

*Day 1: Arrive in Denver (DEN)
transfer to hotel*

Day 2: Denver to Golden

Day 3: Golden to Walden

Day 4: Walden to Craig

Day 5: Craig to Grand Junction

Day 6: Grand Junction to Gunnison

Day 7: Gunnison to Denver

Day 8: Departure

7 Night/8 Day Itinerary:

Day 1, Arrival in Denver:

Depending on Arrival time, we may be able to spend the afternoon at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge was converted from a United States Army weapons manufacturing facility in 1992. Located just outside of the Denver International Airport at roughly 5200 feet of elevation, this 16,000-acre park is home to Bison, Mule Deer, the endangered Black-footed Ferret, Prairie Dogs, Burrowing Owls, and much, much more. Nearly 300 unique species of birds have been recorded here as well. Burrowing Owls and Ferruginous Hawks will be our focus, but there are also great opportunities for Prairie Dogs, Mule Deer, and Bison as well. Note: If it's too late, we'll start at the refuge on day 2.

Lodging at Holiday Inn Express or similar

Day 2, Denver to Golden:

Today we'll spend the morning at a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek, then the afternoon in and around the Pawnee Grasslands in search of Burrowing Owls, Longspurs, Grosbeaks, and other open grassland/ prairie species.

This particular site, located in rural northeast Colorado, is one of the only known places in the state to see Greater-prairie Chickens dance on the prairie. Other grassland specialty species we can expect to see include Vesper Sparrows, Cassin's Sparrows, Say's Phoebe, Horned Larks, and Western Meadowlarks. We may also luck into a herd of Mule Deer or Pronghorn. The Pawnee Grasslands, situated at 5500 feet of elevation, is a federally protected National Grassland comprised of nearly 200,000 acres. Specialties sought after here include Burrowing Owls, Thick-billed & Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Mountain Plovers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Ferruginous Hawks, and more.

Lodging at Hampton Inn or similar

Day 3, Golden to Walden:

We'll start the morning at the high-elevation Loveland Pass in search of White-tailed Ptarmigan, later spending the afternoon perusing viewable feeders in search of all three Rosy-finch species.

Loveland Pass is situated at 11,400 feet in north central Colorado. One of the highest mountain passes to



Dusky Grouse

stay open year-round, this day will offer stunning mountain views while we search for the elusive and well camouflaged White-tailed Ptarmigan. Following a hopefully successful hunt, we'll travel to slightly lower elevation in the lovely town of Silverthorne. Species expected here include all three Rosy-finches (Black, Brown-capped, and Grey-crowned), Steller's Jays, Pygmy Nuthatches, Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Bluebirds, American Dippers, and more. We'll also make stops at every local reservoir that time allows for, in search of any waterfowl or rarities that might turn up.

Lodging at Antlers Inn or similar

Day 4, Walden to Craig:

This is the morning for Greater Sage-grouse, and this particular Lek is located in a quiet mountain town in north central Colorado situated at 8200 feet. Though photography can be a challenge as it's important to stay in our vehicle to not disturb the birds, this stop offers a stunning, up close look at the mating rituals of one of the most iconic birds in all of Colorado.



Cassin's Finch

The afternoon will be spent checking the local reservoir for waterfowl and shorebirds, and exploring the diverse habitats along the auto tour at the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge.

Lodging at Candlewood Suites or similar

Day 5, Craig to Grand Junction:

This will be a very early morning wakeup, as we will need to be situated in a private Sharptailed Grouse photo blind before dawn. Hosted by Colorado Grouse Tours, this stop will offer an intimate morning with one of Colorado's iconic native game species. After a few hours in the blind (accompanied by hot coffee and snacks), we'll spend the majority of the afternoon around Routt County with Colorado Grouse Tours in search of Dusky Grouse, Sandhill Cranes, Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, and more.

Lodging at La Quinta Inn or similar

Day 6, Grand Junction to Gunnison:

This morning will be spent at a Gunnison Sage-Grouse lek. Designated as its own unique species in 2000, the Gunnison

Sage-grouse is one of the rarest endemic birds that call Colorado home. Since then, as its habitat has declined, the bird's population has declined as well. With only 4,000 known birds left in the wild, this species is very well protected by Colorado State. There is only one known place to view the lek of these birds, at the Wuanita Hot Springs Watchable Wildlife site in Wuanita Hot Springs, Colorado. This isn't a great site for photography, but it is a great chance to see one of the rarest birds in North America. We will spend our morning here. The rest of the day will be spent checking local reservoirs for shorebird rarities and waterfowl, and any other potential birds we've missed on our trip.

Lodging at Holiday Inn or similar

Day 7, Gunnison to Denver:

Today we'll be traveling back to Denver through the mountains. We'll stop for any potential high elevation birds we might have missed on the way. This day will be left open for flexibility's sake. Potential wildlife includes Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goats, and Elk.

Lodging at Holiday Inn Express or similar

Day 8, Departure:

After breakfast, departure for airport (DEN) and flights home.

Included for the duration of this itinerary:

Price includes accommodations with breakfast, all ground transportation, guide, entrance fees.

Not Included:

Meals other than breakfast, tips, airfare, alcoholic beverages, gift shop, laundry, and other items of a personal nature are not included.

Travel insurance:

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you. For details, please see

<https://www.naturalselectionstours.com/travel-insurance/>



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109 Eaglewood Way, Athens, Georgia 30606

info@naturalselectionstours.com

www.naturalselectionstours.com