

Trip to Colorado

June, 1990

(See list of campgrounds at the end.)

Beaver, Utah
May 30, 1990

After days of hurry-scurry activity, getting a Breeding Bird Atlas mailing ready to go and packing, we got on the road yesterday at 5:15 a.m. The previous day there had been an unprecedented May rain storm (typical winter storm type), and the desert was cool with scattered clouds. There was little wind fortunately. We thoroughly enjoyed the drive!

We drove to Victorville, encountering a bit of fog in Cajon Pass, had breakfast at Denny's, then on via I-15 to Beaver, Utah--about 50 miles north of Cedar City. We stopped for lunch along the road; it was so nice and cool, we didn't feel the urge to seek out an air-conditioned restaurant. Jim and I took turns driving. We both took nice restful naps while the other one was driving, so the drive wasn't too tiring. Reclining seats are wonderful!

We headed for the Beaver Cyn. RV park, where we had stayed once before. It's on the east edge of the little town of Beaver and nowhere near the freeway--nice and quiet. The place is surrounded by farmland. The only sounds we heard last night were cattle lowing. Even they quit early. This morning we awoke to Western Meadowlarks. One has a funny song. Maybe tomorrow I'll try to record it.

We ate dinner last night at Maria's Cocina, a little Mexican restaurant right on the grounds. It's way off the beaten track on this little side road, but the local folks obviously know about it. I must say we had one of the best meals I've ever eaten in the state of Utah. (Of course, Utah has about the poorest food in the U.S., so that isn't saying much.) It was one of the best Mexican meals anywhere. It wasn't fancy, but very tasty. Jim and I both had chicken enchiladas. It rained intermittently after we arrived, but fortunately the heaviest shower came while we were eating.

After yesterday's long drive, we decided to putter around here today. As we were entering town yesterday, Jim had spotted a boggy pasture with Yellow-headed Blackbirds, so we headed down there. Jim photographed them from the truck window. We also found there were Common Snipe "singing" from fence-posts. A pond in front of a motel across the road had a dozen or so Wilson's Phalaropes twirling around in it. That area has been the best place for birds today. Jim is there right now (7:30 p.m.) for the third time today.

We drove a number of roads in the area, both west and east of here. The westerly road produced another snipe photo, but not much else. The easterly road is a state highway up into the Mtns. We looked over a couple of U.S. Forest Service campgrounds, with the idea that we might move up there tomorrow for a couple of days. One was right along a stream and had Solitary Vireos and Yellow Warblers apparently on territory. The other was in a tiny patch of pinyon/juniper woodland and might have Gray Vireos, a bird I'd dearly love Jim to get a picture of. However, we do want to get on to Colorado, so maybe we'll save these places for another trip.

Colorado Natl. Monument
May 31, 1990

This morning Jim tried once again for the Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Common Snipe south of Beaver. The wind was ruffling the birds' feathers pretty badly, and the snipe stayed in the grass. He did take a couple of pictures of them there, though, but they're probably nothing special.

After that we went back to the trailer and hitched up for the 325 mile drive via I-70 to Colorado Natl. Mon., just south of Grand Junction Colorado. Jim Lane's bird-finding guide promises Gray Vireos here, but so far we've seen very few birds of any sort--just fleeting glimpses of Mourning Dove,

Turkey Vulture, White-throated Swift and at dusk the solitary "peent" of a Common Nighthawk high overhead. The monument is the eroded northern edge of the Uncompahgre Plateau, where it looms high over the Grand Valley of the Colorado River. Many colorful layers of rock reminiscent of those found all over Utah are visible. The road climbed the steep cliff face to the plateau where the campground and visitors center are. There was road work which caused a 30 minute delay on the way up, while we waited for the pilot car leading the down-hill traffic.

I think we'll take the trailer in the morning and go out the other end. The place the Lane book recommends for Gray Vireos is near the other entrance anyway. Certainly there is nothing much here in the way of birds. The habitat seems right, however--Pinyon/Juniper woodland. I don't think people know very much about that bird and its specific habitat requirements.

Cedaredge, CO

3:30 p.m., June 1, 1990

We struck out on Gray Vireos this morning, although I did record something that sounded a bit like a Solitary or Gray high on a hill. It sang briefly, then subsided. Whenever I played my tape back to the bird, it sang while the tape was being played, but ceased as soon as the tape did. We never saw the bird, and the source of the sound never moved, despite our trying for 15 min to lure it down the hill.

We really enjoyed the drive, though, for the geological features were spectacular. Yesterday I bought the book, Roadside Geology of Colorado (and also the brand new one on Utah). It was fun interpreting the landscape before we came to the signs at the scenic turnouts. We got pretty good at distinguishing Wingate sandstone from Entrada sandstone. Both are red, but Wingate is redder. More important, they are separated by the Kayenta formation, a sedimentary layer laid down by water. The Wingate and Kayenta are petrified dunes. The Kayenta is silica-rich and serves as a cap to protect the Wingate from erosion, thus it is the usual formation which has high vertical walls. On top of the Entrada is the Summerfield formation, where uranium and vanadium deposits are located. Above that is the Morrison formation, where dinosaur bones are sometimes found. In fact, the largest dinosaur ever was found just outside the north park entrance. (There! I just wrote all that from memory! I think I learned my lesson.)

There were also quite a few wildflowers, although most seemed to be a bit past their prime. On the south side of the road in the cuts where there is a bit more shade, there were occasionally lovely mixtures of colors--red paintbrush, purple beardtongue, pinkish-white evening-primrose, yellow groundsel, etc. Jim took a few pictures of them. There was also a small yucca, Harriman yucca according to the signs. Only a few were still in bloom.

As the morning progressed, the weather deteriorated, until by noon it was blowing a gale and starting to rain. We ate our lunch in the trailer at the Devil's Garden picnic ground just inside the park entrance--after the road descended the grade from atop the plateau.

The weather looked so bad that we decided to find a place for the night. I had read of a place, Aspen Trails Campground here in Cedaredge that sounded nice and off the beaten track. When we got to the spot, there were aspens all right, but not in the campground. They had all been chopped down and lawn planted for the RV park. The place looked really tacky, too, with lots of cheap signs all over the edge of the road advertising T-shirts, soda, etc. The sites where the trailers were parked were all out in the middle of the property. There didn't seem to be any way for us to get a site that backed up against the aspen grove. So we turned around and headed back the way we came. (The only places ahead were Forest Service campgrounds which don't open until June 6.)

On the way up here Jim had spotted a tiny RV park, Shady Creek RV Park right in Cedaredge, which seemed to be in a wooded setting, so we came back here. It has only 8 sites, 3 occupied, and is behind a row of houses, but our site backs up on a tiny babbling brook, with willows on either side. We may even be able to hear the trickling water if the wind ever subsides.

The owner, Maynard Nelson, is ultra-friendly. As usual, Jim mentioned that we were birders.

About 15 minutes after we registered, Maynard came out to our trailer. It turned out he had been calling all over the county trying to track down a new Audubon Chapter he had heard was forming. They're having a field trip tomorrow. I called the leader, Dick Guadagno, and we plan to go with them on their outing. They're going up onto Grand Mesa--the largest flat-topped mtn. in the world, according to the publicity around here. It's over 10,000 ft high. I think Mother and I drove across it when we were in Colorado a number of years ago. I hope the weather front passes as forecast, so we can have a nice morning's birding.

Cedaredge, CO

8:00 p.m., June 2, 1990

A long day, but a rewarding one. We met the Audubon group at 7:30 a.m. in a town called Paonia. There were 10 of us in all--a very pleasant bunch of people. Only the leader was very knowledgeable, but he knew his birds quite well. A hearing loss prevented him from detecting them as well as I could, though.

We drove up a smooth, wide, gravel road, making stops at various places he had found productive when he scouted the area earlier in the week. Most of the birds were typical western mountain birds, so we felt quite comfortable with the assortment.

We made several stops to bird beside the road. Then the last stop was beside an old logging road. We walked a ways down the road. When we came to a creek which had to be forded on rocks, I balked at crossing it and went back to the truck and got out my tape recorder to record a few birds while I waited for the rest of the people to get back. My best tape was a Fox Sparrow. It sounds quite a bit like our stephensi race, and looks like it, too, except for bill size. Our form has a huge bill; this one's was quite small.

After the group dispersed around noon, we went back to the town of Hotchkiss and had lunch. It was pretty awful. They asked us how we wanted our hamburgers cooked, so we thought that was a good sign, but unfortunately they came cooked to a cinder--like Methodist Youth Fellowship burgers of my high school days.

After lunch I asked Jim if he was worn out, and he said he really wasn't, so I suggested we go visit the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument. We were fairly close to the place. Mother and I had visited the south rim on our 1976 trip to Colorado. The north rim is reached from the main hwy via an 11-mile gravel road, so it was pleasantly devoid of people.

Our first stop was at a nature trail which starts from the campground. As we walked through the large pinyon/juniper woodland, there were loads of birds--quite unlike Colorado Natl. Mon. I even thought I recorded a Gray Vireo, but after seeing the bird, I think it was only a Solitary.

I found a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher incubating 4 eggs in a waist-high nest. I heard the bird fussing and scolding. Then she flew toward the front side of the bush, not 10 feet from where I was standing, and disappeared! At first I couldn't see how that was possible. Then I noticed a solid lump in the bush, put my binoculars on it and discovered a large black eye with a clean white eye ring peering at me from a nest. Her fine black bill was quivering. When I aimed my microphone at her, I found she was singing a soft little sub-song. She allowed me to approach to within 3 feet of her before flushing. Then she gave the agitated cries which had called her to my attention in the first place. Jim took several pictures while she was off the nest and on conspicuous perches. After a very short time we left her to her nesting chores. What a bird! Most birds are not that bold.

While I was waiting at some distance for Jim to photograph the gnatcatcher, a Broad-tailed Hummingbird male came to within 3 feet of my feet and fed from a paintbrush blossom. Other birds in the area were Hermit Thrush and Cooper's Hawk, both of which I recorded. All were surprisingly approachable, despite the fact that few people seem to visit this area.

After all this birding, we finally got to the edge of the chasm. It is the deepest gorge in the U.S., formed by the Gunnison River cutting through black Precambrian gneiss, the oldest rock in the world and very hard. The river found its route when the bedrock was covered with layers of soft

sedimentary rock. It cut through this very easily. By then its path was set, so it had to cut through the bedrock. Very few streams entered from the side, so the canyon walls were not eroded away. Finally, the river itself has an unusually steep descent through the canyon and is loaded with boulders and gravel, which make effective cutting tools.

Even mountain-goat Jim felt a bit of vertigo when he peered over the railing at the chasm below. I had no trouble keeping him behind this railing! As we approached the gorge for the first time, Jim exclaimed, "Look at those Violet-green Swallows--so confidently soaring out over the emptiness. What courage."

Somehow the sight of these birds thousands of feet above the bottom of the canyon was more impressive than seeing them high in the sky overhead.

At one stop along the rim drive, there were both Violet-green Swallows and White-throated Swifts flying back and forth over the rim, sometimes almost parting our hair, they flew so close to us. To them we were apparently just another tree.

Just as we were about to leave the Monument, we caught sight of a raven darting about over the road 200 yd ahead of us. Approaching a little closer, we saw there was a female grouse frantically trying to run it off. We surmised she had chicks hidden in the grass beside the road, and the raven knew it. Jim got out and went forward to try to photograph the grouse, thinking she would be less likely to leave the scene with chicks to protect. Such proved to be the case. He thinks he got some fairly good pictures of her. He also solved her raven problem, for that bird fled as soon as he got out of the truck.

We're not sure what species of grouse it was, but the habitat was right for Sage Grouse. It could have been Blue, though. Maybe I can figure it out from the photos. [It was Blue.]

We didn't get back to Cedaredge until 6:30, so decided to eat dinner in a little Mexican restaurant down the street from our campground. It was pretty awful--lots of food, but little meat or cheese--just lots of beans! Not much flavor except heat either. (It wasn't as hot as what I ate in Springfield on my last trip to Colo., though.)

The weather has been perfect today, high in the 70's, clear and only a slight breeze. Quite a contrast from yesterday. We heard on the TV news that one particularly strong gust of wind had done some damage in Grand Junction at about the same time as we were driving through it.

Evenings are very long here. It's 8:40 and still quite light. Even so, I think it's bedtime after such a long day.

South Rim Campground, Black Canyon of the Gunnison Nat. Monument
5:00 p.m., June 3, 1990

This morning we went by ourselves to Fruitgrowers' Reservoir near Cedaredge, a favorite with the local birders. It's shallow with willows, reeds, etc., along the edge. Since it was off on a side road, it turned out to be an excellent spot to record. Only 10% of the time was noisy with an occasional car or airplane. Some places I think I'm lucky if it's quiet 10% of the time.

The birds weren't anything unusual, but I did get a good Yellow Warbler song--both the typical "Sweet, sweet, sweeter than sweet," and something different, which I thought was a different bird at first. The quality was Yellow Warbler, but the melody was sort of like a MacGillivray's. I also recorded a nice Killdeer, which flew all around me in a 360 degree circle, screaming all the while. In addition, I got Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and a nice mix of many bird sounds. Jim photographed the Yellow Warbler, and seemed happy with how he did.

We went back and got the trailer, then drove the short distance (perhaps 50 miles) to where we are now. This campground is in an area near the rim of the canyon, but we can't see it from here. The habitat is mostly serviceberry and Gambel oak. Both are scrubby, making a thicket about 6-12 ft high. The serviceberry bushes are in full bloom and covered with white flowers. It's a member of the rose family, and the blossoms look like miniature single roses. They aren't fragrant like roses, though.

Yellow Warblers are singing all around the trailer, and we had not been here an hour before one was happily splashing away in Jim's little bird bath under the dripping water bag. I got a good recording of one singing a solo, instead of mixed with all sorts of other species. I also got a nice Green-tailed Towhee song. It had lots of the mew calls interspersed with the song--something I don't think I had very well before.

After lunch I took the nature trail which started out from the campground. It turned out to be 3/4 of a mile--all down hill, ending at a viewpoint along the road. I decided to hike back via the road--1/2 mile, all up hill. At 8000 ft in the sun, I was pooped when I got back.

Jim had been taking a nap when I left and said he would follow after me when he awoke. I didn't want him to have to suffer that awful uphill 1/2 mile back, so I drove to the viewpoint. I no sooner arrived there than he hollered at me from 50 yd down the trail. He was afraid I had merely stopped there on my way to the Visitors Center and wouldn't pick him up. Actually I was prepared to wait there an hour for him.

Black Cyn. of the Gunnison, CO

7:00 p.m., June 4, 1990

Despite the fact that we're over 8000 ft in elevation, it got pretty hot here this afternoon (mid-80's I'd guess). According to the TV news, it was 97° in Grand Junction and nearly as hot in Montrose, just down the hill from here. Fortunately it cools off to two-blanket temperatures at night (3 blankets for Jim).

This morning as I was walking around the little loop where we are parked, I discovered a female Yellow Warbler attacking its reflection in a car mirror. When I told Jim of this, he had to set up his mirror beside his little bird bath. That really got the attention of our female. He left it up only a few minutes, but she's been in and out of the area ever since. And the male wasn't seen all day until just a few minutes ago as we were eating dinner. Yesterday only the male came to the water, although we saw the female in the serviceberry bush occasionally.

According to the Birders Handbook, males feed in the treetops, while females feed nearer the ground. Also, females do all the incubating.

This morning right after breakfast, while Jim was photographing "Little Yeller," I set out for a walk along the park road--no more scary trails for me! Jim came along an hour or so later and picked me up.

Along the way, I saw lots of Green-tailed Towhees and Yellow Warblers--and Brown-headed Cowbirds. The Yellow Warblers were not everywhere, however. Unfortunately the Brown-headed Cowbirds were always seen where there were Yellow Warblers. I wonder how they're coping. I do know that Yellow Warblers have co-existed with cowbirds in the Great Plains since before the continent was settled. On the other hand, Yellow Warblers in Southern Calif. are almost nonexistent at low elevations where cowbirds are abundant.

We've seen lots of deer here. A group including an older buck, a younger buck, a doe and a couple of half-grown fawns wanders through the campground occasionally. Sometimes they're all together, sometimes the bucks are separate from the doe and youngsters. As I walked along the road for 2 1/4 miles, I saw several groups of deer in the bushes.

I also saw a Blue Grouse (sex?) fly across the road 100 yd in front of me. I recognized it by the tail pattern. Then after Jim picked me up, we found females in a couple of different places. He got out and stalked them. They held their ground for photos, so he was very pleased. Most of them were bust shots of the bird partly hidden in the grass, but he thinks he got one or two showing the tail, which is the main thing that distinguishes this species from other grouse.

We've seen Yellow-bellied Marmots in a couple of places along the road, too, but didn't try to photograph them because parking was poor. Maybe later in the trip we can get them. Jim has good Hoary Marmot pictures from Glacier N.P., but very poor Yellow-bellies.

We stopped for a while at one of the overlooks, where Jim tried to photograph the White-

throated Swifts and Violet-green Swallows in flight--not much success. I did succeed in getting fairly good recordings, I think, but not as good as I wanted.

I think a little more on the fascinating geology of the Black Canyon is in order. The walls are mostly black Precambrian gneiss, but in the fissures, there is a reddish volcanic intrusion called pegmatite, which is even harder than the gneiss. Differential erosion leaves tall pillars of pegmatite. In one spot, one can see pegmatite dikes protruding out from both sides of the canyon.

The north wall of the canyon is more sheer than the south one. This is because the sun doesn't shine on it, so moisture doesn't linger there. Moisture freezing and expanding in the cracks and fissures of the south side causes the walls to crack and fall into the abyss more. Even so, the south side has mighty steep walls!

After our morning's drive (and my walk) along the rim, we relaxed this afternoon. Jim kept a vigil on the Yellow Warbler at the birdbath, photographing her occasionally out the window. He feels pretty good about his pictures of both the male and the female.

Nathrop, CO

4:30 p.m., June 6, 1990

We're in Brown's Campground in the tiny village of Nathrop, about six miles south of Buena Vista. It's a lovely shady spot by a rushing creek. (All creeks are rushing here, because it's been so warm. The snow is really melting fast up in the mountains.) Towering narrow-leafed cottonwood trees surround us.

We left Black Canyon of the Gunnison yesterday morning shortly after breakfast and drove over Monarch Pass (11,300 ft), then north to here, looking for the idyllic campsite all the way. This place isn't perfect because it's pretty near the highway and doesn't have a water hookup down by the shady river. (We could have had full hookups up on the top of the ridge, but would have been in the full sun. Unfortunately, with our solar panels, we'd far rather have water than electricity. Our water tank only lasts about 4 days, and our gray water tank fills up in two.)

We arrived here about 3:00 yesterday afternoon. Up by the office they have all sorts of bird feeders. To our delight, there were several ultra-tame Evening Grosbeaks hanging out around them. They eat seed a while, then sit in the trees above the feeders the rest of the time. Jim worked on photographing them yesterday and is at it again right now. There are also Common Grackles, which he wouldn't turn down. (He does have a few pictures of them, but none of the Evening Grosbeak male.)

Weather is pretty warm for 8000 ft--high around 80°, I'd guess. I don't think we'll be heading for the plains before we have to if this keeps up. It's been in the 90's in Denver.

Jim just now came back from up by the office, reporting that he had successfully shot the female Evening Grosbeak, but not the male. He also said that the TV was on up at the office and that there is a tornado watch in effect around Ft. Collins. I think we'll stay here for sure! Thunder heads seem to be building up over the mountains on both sides of here right now. I hope they don't deposit rain on my BBQ in a couple of hours.

This morning we drove up a county road (west from Nathrop) about 10 miles into the mountains--to about 10,000 ft. Our first stop was at a fish hatchery. The fish were almost invisible in the murky water, but there were Violet-green Swallows and Mountain Bluebirds nesting in a bird apartment house set up on a building nearby (Purple Martin house, I'd guess). Jim thinks he got a wonderful swallow picture--a back view showing all the colors.

Then we went on up the road, passing the Deer Valley [Guest] Ranch where Mother and I spent a few days. (We didn't care for the place, as I recall.) We checked out three U.S. Forest Service campgrounds, but decided they were no nicer than where we are now.

The road went along beside rushing Chalk Creek, and was it ever turbulent! The good road (gravel the last 7 miles) ended at St. Elmo, a ghost iron-mining town. Almost a ghost town, that is: there was one store open selling souvenirs and snacks. It was quite a large town in its day, and most

of the buildings are still more or less intact, though by no means livable.

There were several hummingbird feeders outside the little store, and Broad-tailed Hummers were zinging all around them. Sometimes every spigot (six in all) of a feeder would be occupied. Jim took a few ID photos for my workshops, but the setting wasn't very picturesque--no cover shots here!

We came back down the mountain, then up to Buena Vista to see if there were any nice campgrounds there. There weren't, so I think we'll stay here. I wish there were some nice hiking trails around here; it's impossible for recording--between the rushing creek and the highway. Jim likes it, though--especially the Evening Grosbeaks, which he reports were there "by the gross," or at least by the dozen, the last time he went by.

Nathrop, CO

5:00 p.m., June 7, 1990

Fort Collins was spared any tornadoes last night, but they certainly hit in Limon and vicinity. That small town is about 100 miles SE of Denver. The local TV news is full of reports of the nearly total devastation of that tiny town. I think the national news is, too.

Here in Nathrop we were spared any bad weather. The thunder heads didn't amount to anything. We decided to stay here one more night and drive up to Leadville for the day. We had had such good luck at the fish hatchery near Nathrop yesterday that, when we saw a sign for the Leadville hatchery, we immediately turned onto the road. It turned out to be in a lovely old 1889 building--the second oldest hatchery in the U.S. (They didn't say what the oldest one was, but we wondered if it was the one in Independence, CA. Why is it that 100 years ago they built such impressive fish hatcheries?)

We're not particularly fond of watching fish swimming around in big vats, but these places need water and so are located near nice riparian areas. We hadn't been there very long when Jim discovered a Red-naped Sapsucker nest six feet off the parking lot and only three feet off the ground! He spent an hour and a half standing near it and was ecstatic about the pictures he was taking.

I discovered there was a one-mile nature trail through the woods and past several small lakes, so I took it. It had me puffing, because the altitude there is around 10,500 ft. I took my tape recorder and got a pretty nice Ruby-crowned Kinglet song. Weather was gorgeous--lovely blue skies with widely scattered puffy white clouds. The trail passed near the site of an old hotel, which burned down in 1894. It was really quite a resort during the silver hey-day in Leadville. (The Unsinkable Molly Brown had her wedding breakfast there, according to the sign nearby.) The site is truly spectacular. Across the lake one has a fantastic view of the two highest mountains in Colorado. They're only a few feet shorter than Mt. Whitney. Of course, they don't look tremendously tall from a 10,000-foot valley.

After our wonderful morning, we drove on into Leadville and took in the multi-image slide show at the Chamber of Commerce. It was fairly good, but the projectors were sadly in need of alignment. They used nine projectors, with images which were supposed to blend at various places on the screen. The subject matter was, of course, the colorful history of Leadville--the gold rush which rapidly fizzled, then the discovery that the black sand all over the place was actually lead carbonate with a high component of silver, the silver rush which followed that, gunfights over poorly described claims, flamboyant characters such as Molly Brown, Baby Doe Tabor, and their men-folk, etc.

After a very good lunch at a local restaurant, I spent about \$60 at a nice bookstore. I was especially happy to find Men to Match My Mountains by Irving Stone. I read it when I spent the summer of 1961 going to summer school in Fort Collins, and I've been touting it to Jim recently. I know he'll love it. I plan to reread it, too.

Before returning here, we drove up into the mine tailings on the east side of town--miles of devastation, with slag piles all over the place. We had recently seen a Nova program on the water pollution that these old tailings in Colorado and adjacent states are causing. Leadville is apparently about the worst. Snow-melt water leaches various heavy metals (lead, cadmium, molybdenum, zinc

and perhaps a few others) into the Arkansas River. It looks like a tremendous problem. We heard on the news the other night that the Sierra Club is suing someone (can't remember who) to force a clean-up. They're faulting the government for not doing anything.

The place is riddled with old mine shafts, "supported" by rotting wooden timbers. At one place we saw evidence of kids building caves into an unstable-looking wall of compressed powdery slag. If they're not suffocated by a land-slide, they'll be poisoned by breathing the dust. What a mess! For some strange reason the Chamber of Commerce slide show didn't mention any of this.

Mountain Meadow Camp, 3 miles west of Empire, CO, on US 40

5:00 p.m., June 8, 1990

We left our pretty campsite under the cottonwoods this morning. We'd have stayed longer if we could have lured some birds to our site to be photographed. They're loyal to the good stuff at the top of the hill, unfortunately.

We stopped at Fairplay, named such by some early miners who weren't happy with the fact that in the mining area they came from men staked out more claims than they could possibly work. They vowed there would be "fair play" here.

The attraction for us here was South Park Village, a collection of furnished old buildings. It's really quite impressive for such a small town to have put together, though would have been more interesting if there had been some people in period costumes in some of the buildings.

We were especially impressed by a collection of dioramas depicting mining techniques. The carved wooden figures and the detail on the equipment really brought the era to life. Amazingly enough, they were made by a man who was severely paralyzed in an auto accident. He had only partial use of his hands, so couldn't carve with a knife. He had to use a hammer and chisel.

A thought for the day written in chalk on the schoolroom blackboard, was an ironic expression of the racism of the era: "So down with every metric scheme taught by the foreign school--we'll worship still our father's God and keep our father's 'rule.'"

Some of the interpretive signs were sadly in need of editing. Some were full of misspelled words, but this one took the prize, even though all the words were spelled right: "This building was built in pioneer Fairplay for a morgue, and was used as such when first built, in connection with a carpenter's shop, which was necessary because all coffins were hand made as required."

After an hour or so there, we continued on our route--over 11,300- foot Hoosier Pass and down into Breckenridge. How that town has changed since I drove through it 15 or so years ago, and not for the better. It's now a terribly glitzy ski town, with huge hotels and lots of shops in pseudo-Victorian or pseudo-Scandinavian/Bavarian architecture painted in all sorts of garish colors. A purplish cerise took the prize. We drove straight through and on our way as quickly as possible.

We got on I-70, drove eastward through the Eisenhower Tunnel, and got off the freeway at Empire. We were happy to see that this village is not a ski resort--just a roadside town. Our campground is three miles from the main part of the village along the highway as it runs between wooded slopes--8600 ft, but quite warm. We reluctantly selected a sunny full-hookup site near the highway, even though there were some no-hookup ones back a little farther that were shaded by ponderosa pines. Since we may stay here several days, we felt that we would be happier here.

I heard Broad-tailed Hummingbirds zinging all around, so Jim put up his feeders, even though we're out in the open. He had no sooner re-entered the trailer than he had a customer. They've been coming by regularly ever since. (We've been here four hours now.)

I selected this area so we can take day trips to the high country. We're very close here to Mt. Evans, Guanella Pass and Loveland Pass--all close to 12,000 ft. or higher. I hope we can find Rosy-Finches and White-tailed Ptarmigans. I also hope the altitude doesn't get us before we find the birds.

This morning we drove up Mt. Evans, the highest road in the USA. The day started out sunny with just a hint of high thin cloudiness. Before the morning was over, it had clouded over, and we even had a few spits of snow, changing to rain on our way down.

The road up the mountain clings narrowly to the side of the steep slope, with no guard rails. Since I'm a more timid passenger than I am a driver, I elected to do most of the driving.

We saw an amazingly wide variety of wildlife on the mountain:

In the spruce forest at lower elevation, an elk walked across the road in front of us.

As we drove higher and were above the treeline, there were numerous marmots sunning themselves on the rocks along the road. We stopped for Jim to try to photograph them, but they were too wary and popped into their burrows. He waited a while for one to come out, but no such luck.

As he was trying for the marmots in one direction, I strolled up the road in the other. There I saw a couple of industrious pikas dashing out. One even hesitated enough that Jim could have photographed it had he been with me.

A little farther up a mountain goat strolled down the road to meet us. (They've been introduced here, I read.) Despite the fact that Jim has several rolls of equally tame mountain goats photographed in Glacier National Park, he of course jumped out and shot a few frames of this one. He said the fellow was bored by the process and looked at him as if to say, "Haven't you ever seen a mountain goat before? I know I'm supposed to be perched on a precarious rock, but this road is a whole lot easier."

We spent the greatest amount of time at Summit Lake. Despite its name, it's not at the summit. It's only 12,800 ft high. The road goes on another five miles to its 14,200-foot terminus, just 64 ft from the top of the mountain.

I had found Rosy-Finches at the lake the last time I drove up the road, but this time no luck. I did hear them high up the talus slope, but only American Pipits were around the melting snow fields and at the edge of the lake. (I also had heard the finches far below when we stopped for the marmots.)

I recorded the pipits between airplanes and cars passing on the road and got some fairly good songs. They do a wonderful song flight display. A male flies up several hundred feet, trilling a shrill chee-chee-chee-chee all the while. The flight is reminiscent of that of the Vermilion Flycatcher, which we saw in Lukeville a couple of months ago. The wingbeats are very rapid, but don't seem to take the bird anywhere.

Another pipit display is on the ground. A bird turns its back to another bird perhaps 12 feet away, raises its tail displaying its white outer feathers, and does a similar chee-chee-chee trill. This causes its mate(?) to fly over to it. Nothing much comes of it, at least at this stage in the season, for the "mate" then flies off another 20 feet and resumes feeding.

At the pass above one end of the lake, we caught sight of some mountain sheep (all ewes unfortunately). Jim climbed up there, but I was unwilling to walk across a ledge in a snow field. He said he got some pretty good photos, as well as a spectacular view of a series of hanging glacial lakes below. I'll have to see that view in his photos, I guess.

Since I had driven the last five miles to the top the last time I was here and was not anxious to re-experience the light-headedness that had chased me down then, I told Jim to go on up by himself. So he did. He said he had no more trouble breathing at the top than he had had at Summit Lake. From the way he dashed about there, that wasn't much trouble! He was gone around 45 minutes. I'll await the scenics he took from the top.

While I was waiting for him (and recording pipits), I had a conversation with a man who told me that people had been banding White-tailed Ptarmigans at the top a few days earlier. Jim saw no sign of the birds or the banders. There were a lot of people and cars up there, though.

We were amazed at the number of bicyclists struggling their way up the grade. It seems to be

the ultimate training road. None of them had made it to Summit Lake when we left, but the day was young.

We got back to the trailer about 1:00 and ate lunch. The morning had apparently tired us more than we thought, for we both took good naps right afterward.

The weather is still intermittently cloudy. In fact, as I've been writing this, we had a quick shower, but the sun's out again already.

Empire, CO

3:00 p.m., June 10, 1990

Loveland Pass was our destination this morning. This pass misses 12,000 ft by just a few feet. It is the alternative route to the Eisenhower Tunnel on I-70, so oversize trucks and those carrying hazardous cargo are forced to use it. It is also the scenic alternative route for tourists. So there was a fair amount of traffic on it, but probably no more than there was on Mt. Evans yesterday, and that road just goes up to the top and ends.

We headed directly to the summit and set out on the trail up the ridge. I didn't go very far, because, despite the new walking stick Jim made for me, the trail was not to my liking--too steep, too much of a drop-off on both sides, and it sloped toward the downhill side when it was on a ledge. Jim, however, kept going.

A man, a boy and a dog came along and passed us, the dog racing all over the tundra, so Jim thought he would follow them, hoping the dog would flush the invisible White-tailed Ptarmigans. The last I saw of him, he was disappearing over the top of the mountain several hundred yards up the slope. He reports he walked about half mile farther; fortunately it was on the level. He wandered all over the meadow up there, but without success. Dejectedly he decided to come back down.

While Jim was out of sight over the ridge, I wandered around near the truck. I did some walking on fairly level tundra, but most of it was too steep for me. Also there were lots of snow fields, which I do not care to walk on. Most of the birds I saw were White-crowned Sparrows (black-lored *oriantha* form, unlike those we have at home). One flew to within 20 feet of me and proceeded to scratch away at some bare ground for at least 5 minutes. I wished Jim could get its picture, for we have none of this form.

Finally I got tired of this. I looked up the hill and discovered Jim standing around near the top. I hoped he had something good, but knowing him, it could have been merely "any bird that'll hold still." Anyway it looked as though he was not going to return very soon.

I decided to walk down the road a ways, so left a note in the truck for him to follow after me and pick me up. (Roads are good footing for someone like me!) I walked about a half mile down the grade. Saw and heard a few birds--Lincoln's Sparrow, Robin building a nest in the highest tree before timber line, etc. I checked out the pond recommended by Lane for Rosy-Finches in the summer, but it was still totally ice-covered. I heard no Rosy-Finches.

The wind was bitter cold, and the sky was overcast most of the time. I was getting cold, so decided to walk on back to the truck. One half mile uphill at 12,000 ft was no picnic, but it surely warmed me up. When I got back, I looked up to where I had last seen Jim and, and he was still there! So I sat down in the lee of the ridge from which the wind came and waited for him.

Finally he came back down after about three hours on that cold ridge with only a flannel shirt and a down vest on. Here is what he had been doing:

After he had descended perhaps a third of the way back to the truck from the ridge top, he heard a loud "cheep" sound. This was repeated several more times, with long pauses in between. It seemed fairly close to him, but he could not spot the source. Then he heard a whole series of these "cheep" calls. It turned out that the source was not as close as he had thought. He finally was able to discern a Ptarmigan (!) calling from atop a rock way back where he had come from.

Fearing that the bird would fly away, he dashed back up the hill. When he got there, he was so exhausted that he had to use all his will-power to fight nausea and weak muscles (including

sphincters) for a full minute. But he soon recovered. He had no sign of chest pain, he said, despite the fact that some doctors in the past have said that he has a heart problem.

So he set to work photographing the bird. After he had shot several frames, it dawned on him that the bird he was shooting was a female and that he had seen a male from down below. (The female was totally brown, while the male retained some white plumage.) So he looked around and spotted the male a few feet away.

He need not have rushed up the hill once he found the birds, for they behaved in typical ptarmigan fashion. Believing that they were invisible, they held their ground, allowing him to shoot all the film he had with him, including a couple of rolls of Kodachrome 25 as well as his usual Kodachrome 64. The first few frames may be incorrectly exposed, for in his haste to get the birds on film before they flew away, he forgot to be sure his camera was set right. It wasn't. However, before he was through, he had what he wanted.

After that success, we felt we might as well give up on Rosy-Finches, so continued on down the other side of the pass. We stopped at one place where there was a nice beaver pond, dam and lodge. Of course, the beaver was nowhere to be seen.

On into Dillon, where we had lunch in an awful restaurant. I had beef stew. I consisted of about 6 bites of beef in the funniest imitation of Mexican salsa. It wasn't totally inedible, but I think a bit more beef and a lot less salsa would have been in order. It was accompanied by yesterday's warmed-over French fries. Jim had a French dip, which was not too bad, he said. Same French fries, though.

Then back to Empire via I-70. Wherever there was a road paralleling the freeway, I took it. We passed through a couple of old mining towns and past a number of homes hidden in the woods.

We got back here about 2:00. Jim promptly collapsed for an hour's well-earned nap, but is now back to devouring Men to Match My Mountains. He's nearly finished with it and is thoroughly enjoying it, as I knew he would. I've read a couple of shorter books, both very interesting. The first was a biography of Augusta Tabor. The second was an absolute joy: Letters of a Woman Homesteader by Eleanore Pruitt Stewart. She homesteaded in Wyoming around 1910 and wrote these letters to a former employer. Her characterizations were priceless, and her zest for life and all its adventures was truly inspirational. I'd recommend it to anyone.

Same day, 7:30 p.m.

We just got back from dinner at the Peck House back down the road in Empire. I had spotted it a block off the highway as we drove through, and it looked nice. It turned out to be the oldest hotel in Colorado still in operation. It was established in 1862 when Peck turned his house into a hotel on the stage line. The original rooms form the nucleus of the present hotel, which even today has just 12 rooms.

The dining room was attractively decorated; the food was OK, but not outstanding. I had breast of duck with raspberry sauce. It was a bit tough, and the raspberry sauce was just on the top. It would have been better had it been cooked by moist heat in the sauce. Jim had a steak, which he had ordered rare. It was more like medium, but he said it had an excellent flavor, so he enjoyed it. We each had a wonderfully decadent dessert to celebrate the White-tailed Ptarmigan.

Kelly-Dahl Campground
7:45 p.m., June 12, 1990

We're in a U. S. Forest Service Campground 3 miles south of Nederland, in the foothills of the front range of the Rockies, but still 8600 ft. Again the habitat is ponderosa pine, but the trees are thicker and we're well off the road. The road itself has little traffic. Only occasionally do we hear a loud truck.

We drove up here yesterday by taking I-70 toward Denver and turning off on the road that

goes by Central City. Jim wanted to tour an old gold mine, but we would have had to wait almost 2 hours for it to open, so we went on our way.

We had been planning to go to Estes Park, but this place caught our eye. We decided to drive around the campground. It looked nice, so we're here for 2 nights. Unfortunately no birds have found our feeding station except Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, and they don't come by very often. There are quite a few species of squirrels, though: Least Chipmunk, Richardson's Ground Squirrel (so pale I thought they were Prairie Dogs at first), Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels (with almost no gold), and Red Squirrels. Our neighbors in the next site have seen Tassel-eared Squirrels in their week here, but we have yet to see one.

The weather has been quite changeable the last two days. It was pretty warm yesterday afternoon and blowing a gale, then last night it clouded up and rained gently for an hour or two. This morning it was much cooler and still windy. Suddenly about 4:00 this afternoon the wind stopped and it got warm again.

This is the first place on this trip that I have not heard some bird singing when I first awoke. Maybe the wind was part of the reason, though. I'll have to give it one more chance, for I don't think it'll be windy tomorrow.

Our neighbors are Sam and Carol Harris from Delaware. They've done various types of volunteer work for the Forest Service, and this summer they are going to be campground hosts at a primitive campground above 10,000 ft--when they get the road open, that is. They're camping here waiting for the word. We've enjoyed sharing experiences with them.

They told us about a bluebird trail on the lowland part of Dillon Pass Road, which starts out just a mile south of here. So we went down there this morning. The road goes up a pastoral valley, and wherever there is open pastureland, someone has put up nest boxes for Mountain Bluebirds. There must be several hundred of them. It seems as though 90% of them are occupied by Tree Swallows, but that still leaves quite a few for bluebirds. Every box seems to have bird activity at it. The openings seem to be designed (with an upward slanting entrance) so no other species finds them attractive. There are House Wrens and Starlings in the vicinity, but neither was using these boxes.

Jim took a few pictures of the bluebirds, but was not totally happy with the situation. The wind was ruffling their feathers, and whenever they perched for a while, they seemed to be hunkered down either because of the wind or because they were warning the Tree Swallows not to try to take over their box. I walked the road for a mile or so, but didn't try to record because of the wind and also because Boulder Creek was roaring through the valley with its banks almost overflowing.

The mainline railroad tracks for the Denver and Rio Grande RR go up this valley, then through the Moffatt Tunnel. I'm sure Mother and I travelled this way in 1952 on our way home from Buffalo. I doubt that it has changed very much since then. Most of the farm houses seem at least that old. The Dillon Pass auto road does not go through the tunnel, but over an 11,000+ ft pass. It is not open yet, but even if it had been, we would not have ventured up there, for it looked socked in with clouds, and some of the mountains nearby which were not cloud-covered had fresh snow on them.

This afternoon while Jim tried to photograph the squirrels outside the trailer, I took a walk around the campground and into the woods nearby. Since there were few birds, I decided to figure out some of the wild flowers. Most are not in spectacular fields, but there are several yellow composites that make the meadow outside our dinette window look very pretty.

St. Mary's Lake Campground, Estes Park, CO

5:00 p.m., June 14, 1990

Two days have passed since I wrote up the log. Yesterday morning Jim went back to the Dillon Pass Road to work some more on the Mountain Bluebirds. He says he got a female, but not the male.

I decided not to go because there was no place there to record, so I took a walk on an old logging road out the back of the Kelly-Dahl Campground. It was logged over many years ago, so the

new trees are anywhere from 12 to 40 ft high. It's a mixture of mostly ponderosas and aspens, but with small bits of meadow interspersed. The birds were not super-abundant, but there were at least a few. Best of all, the wind was not bad. It wasn't totally calm, unfortunately. Also there were far too many airplanes. I guess we were on the main route from Denver to points west. However, I figure 10% of the time there were no planes. That's better than Orange Co., where it's about 1%!

It was very pleasant walking through the woods totally alone. The campground was almost empty, so this was not surprising. I got a nice recording of a Warbling Vireo song, maybe my best yet. I also got pretty good Yellow-rumped Warbler songs and Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco calls. They sounded like alarm calls because I was too near a nest, but when I stepped back to watch their activities, they drifted off to another part of the woods and showed no more interest in the area. Maybe it was just a territorial dispute between two birds.

At one point while I was standing quietly waiting for a bird to start singing so I could record it, I caught sight of a rabbit about 40 ft away. It obviously didn't see me at all, for it decided to move in my direction. Hippy-hop it came until it was no more than 3 ft from my feet. Suddenly it halted, looked at my feet, then my knees, then my whole person. What a shocked rabbit it was!. It lost no time in bounding off at a 90° angle from its original trajectory.

During this time I got a good look at it. It was smoothly gray brown, not brindly like our Brush Rabbit. It's feet were rather large and white. Its ears seemed intermediate in length between a cottontail and a jackrabbit. When I looked it up later in the mammal book, I decided it must have been a Snowshoe Hare. The book showed them either all gray-brown (summer) or all white (winter), so I decided this one had not finished changing. (Today in Rocky Mtn. Natl. Park one ran across the road in front of us, and it seemed to have even more white on the feet and belly.) I think these were the first Snowshoe Hares I've ever seen.

We left the campground around 10:30 a.m. and drove up here to Estes Park. We're in an open barren campground, but the view of the surrounding mountains and hills is nice. Fortunately there aren't too many other people here; it's a little off the beaten track. We looked at several other RV parks, and they were pretty full.

Around the middle of the afternoon we drove into Rocky Mtn. Natl. Park and took the 9-mile spur road to Bear Lake. We stopped by a lovely flower-strewn (yellow golden banner and slightly oranger wallflower) meadow with mountains in the background. Then on up the road to the lake.

We met quite a few cars as we drove up, yet no one passed us nor did we pass anyone, so we figured maybe it late enough in the day that we'd have the place to ourselves. Were we ever wrong! When we got there, we found a parking lot full of cars. Walking the 100 yd to the lake, we were shoulder to shoulder with the typical national park tourists, all bedecked in flowered shorts and striped shirts, yacking away about trivia, and trying to cope with wailing over-tired kids. I had planned to walk the trail around the lake (1/2 mile), but gave the idea up quickly. This decision was confirmed when a huge bus-load of obnoxious high school age kids came on the scene.

Despite all the crowds of people, we caught sight of a small animal that looked like a weasel with a bushy tail dashing back and forth across the path to the lake every few minutes. Jim caught sight of it entering and exiting a trash can. We think it ran up a tree with its "treasure." Later when we looked it up in the book, we decided it must have been a Pine Marten--according to the book a very secretive animal! It was certainly the first one I'd ever seen.

We left quickly, dreading the morrow with more crowds of people.

We had dinner last night in an attractive restaurant overlooking a pond, supplied by water diverted from the Fall River. It was daylight throughout our meal, so we enjoyed watching the birds and even a muskrat out the window as we ate. Food was good. I had Ruby Trout, which tasted a little like salmon. Jim had prime rib.

Each day lately has dawned cloudless. Then as the day progressed, it got cloudier and cloudier, until it was completely overcast. Last night just after we went to bed (around 9:30) we had a little rain, hail, and thunder and lightning. It's threatening to do the same tonight, too. In fact, Jim just heard on the TV that there is a tornado watch down on the plains, especially for the Ft.

Collins/Greeley area. We were planning to go down there tomorrow.

This morning we decided to get an early start and drive up Trail Ridge Rd. We succeeded fairly well in this. We had the board walk through the beaver pond to ourselves and saw three species of duck (Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked, Mallard), Spotted Sandpiper, etc., which we got to scare off. Even after the people got on the road, they seemed to be more spread out than that mob at the lake yesterday. We stopped at the place the Lane bird-finding guide recommends for Ptarmigan. (It's a different place from the one recommended in the old edition, which I used on my last trip here.) We hiked up the boggy, rock-strewn tundra. I used the new walking stick Jim made for me. What a help it was on the uneven terrain!

The first birds we saw were what we had sought at Mt. Evans and Loveland Pass: Rosy-Finches! There were about a dozen of the Brown-capped race [now a full species] all over the large snow-field next to where we were walking. (I'd guess 20 to 30% of the land up on the tundra was still covered with snow.) They were quite flighty, but still allowed Jim to get fairly close to them--at least at first. Unfortunately there were a couple of other birding couples up there, and one of the men persisted in walking straight toward them with his camera. This spooked them, so after that Jim's cautious methods of diagonal stalking didn't seem to work anymore.

We walked on up (maybe 1/4 mile total) and found a pair of White-tailed Ptarmigan--tame, of course! These birds had both been banded, and the female wore a radio-transmitter, complete with 6 inch antenna, so the photos won't seem to be of truly wild birds. Obviously someone is really studying these birds. (Only one of the Loveland Pass birds was banded. Neither had a radio.)

We also saw all the rest of the typical tundra birds in the general area--Horned Lark, American Pipit, White-crowned Sparrow. Jim got a photo of the latter for me, because it is one of the dark-lored races, unlike the ones we commonly see on the Pacific Coast.

When we set out on our little jaunt, the sun was bright and warm and there was little wind. Before we came down, the wind had started to blow, and our light wraps were totally insufficient. Before we were off the tundra entirely, it was blowing a gale and bitter cold.

On up the road we stopped at the Tundra nature trail. (I think this is where I saw the Ptarmigan last time--from an old 2-track road which branches off from the trail.) Here there were Yellow-bellied Marmots on the rocks, which allowed photography. In places with fewer people, those animals scurry for their burrows and stay there when we get anywhere near them.

Then when we got to the next turn-off, what did we find, but a pan-handling marmot. Jim, of course, obliged. The animal wasn't too fond of having its tail fondled, however, and kept ducking back when Jim got that fresh.

Jim dearly loves to feed wildlife, and the animals in this park seem totally used to being fed. We saw only one half-hearted sign asking people not to feed them. Jim carries raw peanuts for the purpose. Before the day was over, he had presented peanuts to Clark's Nutcrackers, Colorado and Least Chipmunks, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels, Red Squirrels, Black-billed Magpies, as well as the afore-mentioned Marmot. What fun! I wished I had had a camera myself when Jim was sitting on a rock photographing a Black-billed Magpie three feet in front of him, while a Red Squirrel was on his knee tugging at his elbow. His favorite recollection is of having a Clark's Nutcracker perched in each hand eating peanuts, while several chipmunks were clawing at his pant-legs.

We only went part way across the tundra section of Trail Ridge Road, turning around at the Tundra Nature Center. Back down in the valley we found Elk (bulls with rather nice racks for this early in the season) and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. The elk were in a beautiful meadow surrounded by aspens, and the sheep were in a huge meadow quite close to the road. Of course the road was lined with stopped tourist cars and even several idling tour buses belching diesel fumes. Even so, the animals were fun to see. There must have been 30 of them--rams, ewes, and even 6 fairly new lambs--all calmly grazing as if no one was watching them.

It's 6:00 now. Better quit and fix dinner. We eat around 7:00 because it stays light so late. (Besides, it keeps us from going to bed so early.) Jim is over talking to our neighbors, Barb and Jerry Jeffries. Jerry works on a fire boat in L. A. Harbor, just as Fred Stoddard, Jim's ex-neighbor in

Huntington Beach did. In fact, he worked with Fred before Fred retired. Small world!

Pioneer Mobile Home & RV Park, Fort Collins, CO

8:00 p.m., June 15, 1990

We decided to leave Estes Park before the weekend. We knew several people had reservations for sites near where we were, so we decided we didn't want to be there for a hilarious weekend or for the late Friday night arrivals which usually occur in a tourist area.

This morning I wandered around the campground's tent section for a couple of hours trying to figure out the wildflowers. I had mixed success; several of the most showy plants were not in my Rocky Mtn. flower book. I decided perhaps we were at such a low altitude, compounded by the open, south-facing slope setting, that these plants were more typical of the Great Plains than of the Rockies.

Same place

7:45 p.m., June 16, 1990

(I was interrupted in writing this last evening because Jim found an excellent bird program on PBS, narrated by George Plimpton.)

We left Estes Park around 9:30 a.m. yesterday and drove down through Big Thompson Canyon. This is the area where there was a catastrophic flash flood in 1976, about 3 weeks after Mother and I were there. It washed out the entire highway for many miles, destroyed many cabins, motels, etc, and killed 139 people. Today it's hard to see where the flood was. Many vacation homes have been rebuilt on their original sites right next to the river. The new road is easy to discern, as it runs through the narrowest part of the canyon. It has a strong vertical concrete bank right next to the river. I wonder if it couldn't withstand another similar flood.

RV parks in Ft. Collins are sadly lacking. The only place closer than 11 miles from where the American Birding Association Convention is to be held is a mobile home park with 31 RV sites. The mobile home part is occupied by quite old vehicles. However, this is compensated for by the fact that the sites are very large and the homes are surrounded by beautiful huge trees. Most of the occupants seem to be poor people, some rather unsavory-looking, but most OK. There is a teenager in a family right across from where we're parked, who seems to be very popular, for there were gangs of kids around off and on all day yesterday. Worst of all, they came in cars equipped with those awful boom-box stereo systems. Two carloads set off around 8:00 p.m. We dreaded their return at some wee small hour, but curiously enough didn't hear a thing.

The RV sites are out in the open and rather close together. Furthermore, they are dead center in the park, right behind the office, so most of the traffic goes past us. Behind us is an Airstream trailer, with occupants who keep their windows closed and the air-conditioner on all the time. They even ran it until around 3:00 this morning, despite the fact that it really is not hot. We did run ours for a little while yesterday afternoon, but that's all. Anyway, we're here for nine nights, so had better make the best of it.

Yesterday afternoon we drove around Ft. Collins and did a few errands. We checked out the Colorado State University Nature Center on the Cache La Poudre River. It looks delightful, and we'll definitely spend some time there before we leave.

I found a nice bookstore downtown and bought several books. Jim finally found a barber shop, which he's been needing ever since we left home. At least he won't look like a biologist at the convention. (They all seem to wear longish hair and scraggly beards.)

We drove around the campus of C.S.U., where I spent the summer of 1961. I think I was able to locate the dorm where I stayed.

The town of Ft. Collins has grown beyond recognition. It has a population of around 65,000 and seems to be a real regional shopping center. Jim found a large toy store and was able to replace

the joy-stick controller for his Atari game, which he had worn out! We ate dinner in a fish/prime rib restaurant last night. I ordered my prime rib rare--and it was! I recalled 1961 when it was impossible to get a steak even medium rare. It never was any rarer than medium well, despite my explanations of how I wanted it. Then there was only one nice restaurant in town.

This morning it is drizzly, as a slight front is passing through. We had planned to drive out to the grasslands, but decided to wait for a better day. (The convention doesn't start til Tues, and today is Sat.)

Fort Collins, CO

7:50 p.m., June 17, 1990

When we got back from today's activities around 6:00 p.m., we found the campground full of RV's. I think several are here for the convention. They're surely piled in close together. Even the site next to us, which we thought they never used, has a trailer in it. Oh, well, there was nothing much to see out there anyway. Ft. Collins could surely use a nice RV park.

Yesterday Jim called his Uncle Randall and Aunt Deb in Greeley, whom he had only met once in his life (in 1976), although he has exchanged Christmas greetings each year. Ran is Jim's father's brother. They invited us to come down there (25 miles away) for a visit and to go out to dinner last evening. They turned out to be a perfectly delightful couple. He's 79 and not in the best of health--physically--but mentally there's nothing wrong with him.

Ran and Deb owned 5 shoe stores until they retired 15 years ago. They were spread all over the area--3 in Colorado, one in Utah and one in South Dakota. From the appearance of their home and car (a nice Cadillac) and the fact that they just sold their condominium in Arizona because of Ran's health, it's apparent that they did very well.

We were amused by Ran's tale of how inept the realtor was who was handled the sale of their condo: "The young man was nice enough, but had no idea how to close a deal. I had to take over and sell the thing."

This morning dawned nice and clear, so we decided to drive out to the Pawnee National Grasslands, 40 miles east of here. (Mother and I spent a day there in 1976, driving up from Ft. Morgan.) The National Grasslands are under the U.S. Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service, although they are not forest at all. They were acquired mostly in the 1930's when many farmers could not afford to keep their farms. They had homesteaded the area during an abnormally wet period, and the size of homestead that the government permitted was much too small to support a family, so when a dry period came along, they failed in large numbers. This was actually a blessing for the environment, for it allowed some remnants of the original short-grass prairie to be preserved. [Some biologists prefer to call this habitat "steppe" in order to conform with international usage. True prairie would not have the shrubs that this habitat has.]

We went first to a National Grasslands campground (Crow Valley) near Briggsdale, which is in a low spot and has lots of cottonwood trees. We promptly resolved to tow the trailer out there as soon as the convention is over. It was delightful--nice large shady sites, and very few people, even though we were there on a Sunday morning. (Most of the people there seemed to be pre-convention birders. Only a few campsites were occupied.)

We found several birds which Jim has no photos of, or at least not first class ones. Orchard Oriole was a highlight, but there were also Brown Thrashers, Blue Grosbeaks, and a few others.

The best thing Jim was able to photograph was a darling sub-adult red fox. A woman from the nearby town said someone had released seven of them in the park, so this last remaining one was somewhat tame. We watched it playing with sticks, leaves, etc., and it permitted rather close approach, so long as we made no sudden moves.

I ran into Harold Holt, who co-authored the Colorado bird-finding guide with Jim Lane. Since Lane's death, he has taken over the guides, but won't keep them up too much longer, he said. (He's 75 years old.) He's revising the Southern California guide and just came back from there. That guide

certainly needs revising, but I wonder if what he does will be really satisfactory. I asked him about a number of Orange Co. places and facts, and he didn't know of any of them. He had not tried to contact anyone in Orange County while he was there--not even Doug Willick, who coordinates the area for American Birds. He had never heard of Huntington Central Park, nor of the Black Skimmers and terns which have colonized Bolsa Chica in recent years. I gathered that the only Southern California birders he contacted were Arnold Small and Guy McCaskie. The guide for Colorado, his home state, is really quite good, but I don't feel he is really thorough enough to tackle guides for other areas, as Jim Lane was.

After lunch we drove out into the open grasslands. We were pretty discouraged about getting photos at first, for it seemed that no bird permitted us to drive the truck anywhere close enough to it for a decent picture.

Then I caught sight of a windmill and a bunch of birds flying around it. Water, I thought. Sure enough, it was pumping water up into a large open tank, 15 ft in diameter and 4 ft deep. The rim was not quite level, so the water was very close to the edge of the tank only on the edge closest to the road. Furthermore there was a wooden fence rail which had fallen diagonally into the water near that front edge. After we had been there for a while, the birds regained their confidence and started bathing and drinking while standing on the submerged fence rail. It was possible to drive the truck right up next to the tank, so Jim was able to sit in the truck and use it as a blind.

Jim completed his series on Lark Buntings. He shot them in west Texas in October, in New Mexico in April, and now in full breeding plumage in June.

Best of all, we found both species of longspurs which breed in Colorado--McCown's and Chestnut-collared. Jim got photos of both sexes of each species. Between the fox at the campground and the birds at the water, he exposed seven rolls of film today--a record for the trip. We hated to leave, because the sun was getting to the low position which makes for fewer bad shadows in a bird photo, but we were pretty tired. We didn't get back here until 6:00.

Ft. Collins, CO

5:00 p.m., June 18, 1990

This morning we went over to the C.S.U. Nature Center--200 acres strung out along the riparian area of the Cache La Poudre River. It has two miles of trails, and I think I must have walked about 1 1/2 miles. Jim spent the morning in attendance at a Red-headed Woodpecker nest, with a Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker nest nearby. The Red-headed, which he needed most, never gave him a pose, but he did get some nice shots of the flicker.

I wandered the trails and fed the mosquitos. They were not impossibly bad, and the repellent was back in the truck, so I just toughed it out. I know I got multiple bites, and they itched at the time, but I don't feel them particularly now.

Most of the birds were common species, but it was fun to see a few more easterly birds again--Eastern Kingbird, Black-capped Chickadee, etc. The best bird of the morning was a Screech-Owl, probably Eastern, which I spotted when I had almost completed the loop. The bird had very little barring on the belly, which made me decide it was the northwestern race of the Eastern Screech-Owl. The *National Geographic* guide shows Westerns with lots of barring there. Fort Collins is in the part of the country where it hasn't been sorted out which Screech-Owl is present.

I went and fetched Jim, and he discovered that there were also three or possibly four juveniles sitting on a branch rather high in a tree. (That's undoubtedly the reason the adult(s) was out and about in the middle of the day.) He got a few 1000-mm pictures of the adult, using two flashes, but by the time he got back from the truck with his second flash unit, the juveniles had melted away.

After lunch we went over to the ABA Convention and picked up our registration packets. I also patronized the sales room and spent close to \$1000, mostly on a new binocular, a Bausch and Lomb Elite 10x 42. It focuses much closer than my Zeiss and also doesn't have to be screwed so many turns to change the focus. I'll now be able to be without my Zeiss, so we may send them in to the

factory to be modified for close focus. Then Jim can use them when he feels like a bit more power than his little Bushnell Custom Compacts (7x 26) give. [He uses them all the time now.]

This morning was quite comfortably cool, but the afternoon has turned very hot. I'm sure it's well up in the 90's. The humidity is quite low--more like a heat wave at home than one in the mid-west, thank goodness. We holed up in our trailer with the A/C on the rest of the afternoon.

Ft. Collins, CO

4:00 p.m., June 20, 1990

It was indeed very hot Monday. The TV that evening said it had been 99° in Denver that day. It didn't really cool off that evening either. A hot dry wind came up--like a Santa Ana wind. We ran our A/C with the windows closed until I awoke around 2:00 a.m. and turned it off and opened the windows.

Monday evening there was an extra unscheduled talk at the convention that had been added since the program was sent out. So we went over to the Marriott for it. It was by Don Roberson, a Pacific Grove, CA, attorney and an expert birder. He and his wife had signed on for a 4-month tour with NOAA to cruise back and forth in the Pacific Ocean surveying sea birds. He had some rather good bird slides for having shot them from the deck of a small research vessel.

Yesterday morning I took Jim back over to the Nature Center, since he had elected not to sign up for the bird-ID lectures. (When he sees a bird he doesn't know, he just says, "Hey, Sylvia, what's this bird over here?") I picked him up at noon. In the afternoon he took me to the meeting and then drove around town doing a few errands.

In the morning I heard Rick Bowers talk about Birds of the Night (owls and nightjars). In the afternoon it was Guy McCaskie on Fall Warblers. Both were excellent, and I took copious notes. Guy McC was not his usual acerbic self. In fact, he was almost gracious. I was really amazed when a woman in the group asked, when the afternoon was 2/3 over, "What's a supercilium? Is it the same thing as an eye line or an eye stripe?" Guy actually apologized for not having defined the term, which I'm sure every other person in the group was familiar with. (Unfortunately these ABA convention workshops are not designed for beginning birders. In Duluth they had alternative sessions for less experienced birders, but this time they were not scheduled. It seems too bad.)

The meetings ended around 3:30. When Jim picked me up, the sky in the west was getting very black, and there were a few spits of rain. After we had been back at the trailer for a while, we had a rip-snorter of a hail storm. Jim had gone over to the shower room and had to wait the storm out over there. The ground was pretty well littered with hail stones--most about 1/4 inch, but a few as big as 1/2 inch in diameter. The cocktail hour was held in a big tent with side flaps that could be lowered. While we were there, there were a couple more cloud bursts, but no more hail.

During the cocktail hour Roger Tory Peterson signed people's field guides. He has a new Western guide that has just been out a month or two. The line snaked all around the cocktail area, and I understand some people stood in that line an hour and a half waiting to have their book(s) signed. Many people brought several books--not just the new one, but some of his other books, too. I decided to skip the whole process, even though I also have several of his books.

Dinner was just OK--unfortunately not the superb cuisine we had at the Duluth Holiday Inn two years ago. After dinner Arnold Small gave a slide-talk on Birding Planet Earth. It was interesting, and he had good slides--as of course he would. However, it was too long. I really pitied the vast majority of the people there, who were going to have to be on busses for the organized field trips as early as 4:20 a.m. the next day.

We decided after the Duluth convention that the bus tours were not for us. We don't like riding in cramped buses for hours, then getting out and birding with at least 40, if not 80 or more, other people. Besides, we like to carry all our photo and recording gear and linger a while at any promising site. So we did not sign up for any of them this time.

Instead, we took the Ft. Collins tour route outlined in the bird-finding guide by Jim Lane and

Harold Holt. It visited a number of lakes and marshes in the vicinity and then went up into the foothills near Horsetooth Reservoir. We saw quite a few species--nothing unusual, though. Jim managed to get some shots of a group of recently fledged Rock Wrens. I recorded the song of the Rufous-sided [Spotted] Towhee. That bird's song is highly variable geographically, so I wasn't even sure what bird I was hearing until it showed itself. Jim got a couple of shots of it, too.

When Jim was down a rocky slope getting the Rock Wrens, he encountered a group of baby skunks. But by the time he had returned to the truck for his "other camera," they had disappeared into their home in a rock crevice. I don't think he got any pixs of them. At least, he did not arouse the ire of Mama!

We got back here around 1:30 and are resting this afternoon. We got pretty sleepy during Arnold Small's program last evening. Maybe the nap we both just had will keep us awake this evening.

Ft. Collins

3:30 p.m., June 21, 1990

This morning dawned clear, but windy. So Jim decided to go with me to the ABA business meeting, rather than to the CSU Nature Center. As the day progressed, it remained windy, but now it is also very cloudy. I think we're in for another rain storm soon.

The business meeting was conducted with a minimum of repetitive discussion. We were impressed with how well the organization is being run these days.

After that there was a short presentation by John Sill, who is a co-author of the hilarious book, A Field Guide to Little Known and Seldom Seen Birds. This was followed by Jon Dunn on how to write up rare bird sightings. This afternoon we heard from David Pearson on Bird Diversity in the Neotropics. He told us why 1/3 of the world's birds are found in South America (ca. 3000 out of 9000).

Ft. Collins

7:00 p.m., June 23, 1990

Thurs. (June 21) evening, was the banquet (delicious prime rib--and rare, too), with the keynote address given by Roger Tory Peterson. His new western field guide has just come out. His address was on Birding in America. It was only mildly interesting, for he reviewed stuff most of us were totally aware of. It was also a bit long. His delivery left something to be desired: he read from a manuscript with only occasional asides.

Yesterday was another day of field trips, which we did not sign up for. This time we decided to drive up into the nearby mountains. We went up SR 14 to Rustic, cut north over a gravel road to another paved road back to US 287, then returned to Ft. Collins.

The drive along SR 14 followed the Cache La Poudre River (French for "cache the powder", which emanates from the era of the fur trappers, who cached their gunpowder at various places along the river). It was a beautiful drive, with the river flowing between steep canyon walls in spots. The river is running full this time of year and sparkled in the morning sun. There are lots of Forest Service campgrounds and picnic areas along the river, and we stopped several times. At one spot there were an incredible number of wildflowers, including some huge red poppies that I don't think can be wild--couldn't find them in the little flower book I had along and haven't yet looked them up in my larger Rocky Mtns. book.

At another spot, the Narrows Picnic Area, Jim found a Chipping Sparrow nest just 4 ft off the ground and photographed it. Adults were feeding chicks.

We found a nice restaurant in the little hamlet of Rustic and thus avoided the back-up lunch of trail mix and cheese, which I bring along for contingencies.

After lunch we drove north on a dirt road with little traffic. It started out along a lovely stream. I

heard a Cordilleran Flycatcher at one spot, but it was high on a cliff and the stream and wind in the foreground were so noisy that I didn't try to record it. I'm afraid I'll have to go home without the sound of that bird. (It's the eastern species formed when the Western Flycatcher was split recently. The western species is now called the Pacific-slope Flycatcher.)

The road then left the stream and climbed into second growth forest--aspens, conifers (Ponderosas?), and open space covered with sagebrush and/or grass. We stopped at one place because I heard Warbling Vireos. There Jim spotted a Williamson's Sapsucker.

At another place (again Warbling Vireos caused us to stop), I found a Mountain Bluebird nest just seven ft off the ground. Jim stood by it for an hour and a half, and ended up with what he has reason to believe will be outstanding photos of the male. The bird was against back-lit alder leaves, and he filled in the near side of the bird with his flash. The bird posed for a long time, so Jim could try all sorts of camera settings and be sure to get a good picture. He was riding on cloud nine all the way back to Ft. Collins. [The pictures *were* great.]

We passed through lots of lovely country on the way back into town, but were a bit late so couldn't stop to see what was there.

Last evening was the worst meal I've had at the convention. It was supposed to be stuffed fillet of sole. It was tiny, all dried up, and mostly stuffing. This was garnished by unadorned partially cooked steamed broccoli and cauliflower. The latter were presented in the way which, I'm sure, turned George Bush off of the vegetable! At least the dessert was pretty good--chocolate cherry layer cake, only a trifle dry.

The after-dinner speaker was Ben King, who wrote the definitive field guide on Southeast Asia. His topic was bird diversity in Asia and was quite interesting. He presented a dismal prognosis for the future of many species of birds in the area, especially China and the Philippines. In China, he said, there is absolutely nothing in the culture on which to hang a conservation ethic. He didn't elaborate on that statement, unfortunately. In the Philippines the problem is destruction of the tropical forests. He predicts that within 10 years they will all be gone, along with the birds which are hanging on in the remaining fragments. He concluded with a bunch of photos of various Asian birds. Fortunately that part went fairly fast, for we were getting sleepy.

This morning I took Jim over to the CSU nature center. I'll be attending workshops all day.

Same day, 4:00 p.m.

This morning's lecture was by Greg Budney from the Cornell Ornithology sound lab on Birding by Ear. It was only moderately useful to me or, I fear, to anyone. For those who might want to learn to use their ears more effectively in birding, it was of little value. For those who are interested in taking up sound recording, it probably had the most value. For someone like me, who is already doing it, it again had little value, although I did pick up a few minor tips on things I'm doing wrong.

This afternoon I heard Kenn Kaufmann repeat the workshop he gave two years ago in Duluth. It was very good, but I'd have preferred to hear him on some new topic.

I sat next to Ed Budd, from Pennsylvania (retired economics professor from Penn State) in this afternoon's meeting. As people always do here, we were exchanging pleasantries about where we come from, etc. He asked me how long I'd lived in Huntington Beach. Then he said he grew up in Orange Co. When I asked him where, he said Santa Ana. He graduated from Santa Ana H. S. in 1938. A little more comparing of notes brought out that he also went to Willard Junior High School and Jefferson Elementary School. Of course, he went through the fearsome Ethel Coffman's 4th grade regimen, as I did!

He started birding while a child under the tutelage of Vanche Plumb. In fact, she became almost a second mother to him. He remembers her very fondly, and said he confessed more of his problems to her than to his own mother. I asked him if he also knew Fern Zimmerman, who was a good friend of Vanche, but he did not. I suspect he grew up before Fern moved to California. (Vanche Plumb was one of Orange County's few really competent early birders. Her field notes are

of great value even today. She died before I became a birder.)

The weather has turned hot again and the forecast is for several more days of heat. We're planning to go out to the Pawnee Natl. Grasslands, Crow Valley Campground tomorrow. There is no electricity there, so we may be rather warm without our air conditioner. I hope we can get a nice shady site.

Ft. Collins

5:45 p.m., June 24, 1990

Last night was our last at the Convention. The speaker was David DeSante who spoke on Vagrants and Vagrancy. It was fascinating, but he went too fast for me to get all I wanted to out of it. He used slides full of interesting information, which I simply had no time to copy. He tried to hurry over the technical stuff so the talk would appeal more to the general evening audience. He concluded with a lot of slides of vagrants which have occurred on the Farallons, where he spent many years as research director.

Crow Valley Campground, Briggsdale, CO

3:30 p.m., June 25, 1990

We're in a U.S. Forest Service Campground, but not in the forest. It's in the Pawnee National Grasslands and is the most extensive riparian area for miles around, though. Large cottonwood trees and brushy willow thickets make it a Colorado birding hotspot in spring and fall migration. It isn't particularly large: it's easy to walk from one end to the other in ten minutes.

We fell in love with the place last week, when we made a day trip out here and resolved to return when the convention was over. Unfortunately, the temperature is 94° and there are no hookups. (The humidity is low, though.) It was 97° earlier until the sky clouded over and started rumbling. Occasional strong gusts of wind occur, too. So far, only a few spits of rain have fallen. We're in the middle of the usual Gallagher weather record-breaker. We seem to bring either record-breaking heat or record-breaking cold to every place we visit. This heat wave started yesterday and the 5-day forecast is for cooling by 1° each day. Big deal!

Yesterday morning we did our laundry, but only after driving all over town to find a laundromat open on Sunday morning. We began to think we were out of luck. We washed our clothes, but brought them along wet, not wanting to sit in that hot building any longer. Besides, I knew the hot, dry air would dry the clothes in no time once I got them on the clothes line. Despite the fact that I had to hang them three garments thick, they were dry within an hour.

We came out here hoping to find the site we hoped for open, and it was--barely. Some dopey birder who drove into the campground behind us went the wrong way around the campground loop and slipped into the site ahead of us. I got out and asked him if he was going to camp. Fortunately, he was not, which, of course, meant that he had no business parking in a camp site at all! If he had answered in the affirmative, we might have had to do battle with him for cutting in ahead of us! As it was, he meekly relinquished the site to us.

We spent most of the rest of the day keeping cool. I found that a damp towel around my shoulders does wonders. In fact, I have one there now. By 8:00 p.m., the temperature had cooled off to 78°. The sun was just going down behind some non-threatening thunderheads, so we thought everything was going to be fine. Unfortunately, about 8:10 a strong gust of wind came by and within five minutes warmed us up to 89°. It was at least 2 hours before it cooled off again. (It got down to 56° by morning.)

This morning dawned nearly clear, and calm. The birds were singing outside our trailer. Even though it was barely daylight, I got up, put on my tape recorder, and spent two hours recording the birds in the area--Orchard Oriole and Brown Thrasher being the best species. Unfortunately, despite the early hour, there was a steady stream of trucks on the highway a quarter of a mile away. When I

went in to fix breakfast at 7:00, I heard lots fewer of them. I wonder why they only come by early. They seemed to be of all different sorts.

Jim finally got the birds' attention at his water drip around noon. Orchard Orioles, Western Kingbirds, Yellow Warblers, Lark Buntings, etc., were coming in. He set up his blind and did an hour or so of photography. The blustery thunder clouds brought wind, though, and that has curtailed his efforts now. And it's only cooled us off by a couple of degrees.

Wayward Wind Campground, Ft. Morgan, CO

4:45 p.m., June 27, 1990

It was an even 100° when we left our beautiful site at the Crow Valley Campground at 2:30 this afternoon. We hated to leave the place, because the birds were gradually getting tuned in to the goodies Jim had set out. But we decided we had to get to a place where there were hook-ups so we could use our A/C.

The heat was usually not unbearable until around noon, so we had the mornings to be out and about. Yesterday morning at first light we drove the recommended auto tour of the Pawnee National Grasslands. There Jim was successful in photographing the third special bird of the grasslands, the Mountain Plover. We found them in several places. At a couple of spots there were chicks running around and a frantic parent doing a distraction display--"broken" wing, piteous cries, the whole thing. The proximity of the chick(s) kept the adult from fleeing the scene, so Jim could photograph both the adult and the chicks. I recorded the cries.

Jim also photographed the Horned Larks and probably got better pictures of that species than he ever has before. There were juveniles, too.

The other main specialties, the two longspurs, he got on the one-day jaunt out here that we had before the convention. Thank goodness he got them then, because he could not have stood the heat this time. The light was only good by the water tank in the afternoon.

We got back around noon. Jim spent the afternoon sweltering in his blind, and I spent it sweltering in and out of the trailer. It was about a toss-up which was hotter. Fortunately our site was shady from about 10:00 a.m. until sun-down. Sundown around here is 8:30 p.m. or so, and it doesn't cool off significantly until after that.

This morning we spent in the campground--Jim in his blind wearing shorts only and me wandering around. I got pretty good recordings of Lark Sparrow song, Orchard Oriole song and calls, Barn Swallow adult and juvenile. Jim's coup was to get both Eastern and Western Kingbirds sitting on the same perch--not at the same time, though.

An added "attraction" around here is the moths! They're not ordinary moths. The local folks call them Miller Moths, but I couldn't find such a creature in my insect books. Anyway they're about 1 inch long with 1 1/2 inch wingspan and mottled dark and light brown. They're absolutely everywhere.

In the daytime they seek out any dark cranny they can find, and somehow they have no trouble crawling into the trailer; I know we can't have let dozens of them in the door. Each evening when we turn on the lights, they emerge in droves. They're not hard to catch and throw out the door--and that's much less messy than swatting them, for they have rather fat bodies. By bedtime we thought we had ejected all but perhaps one or two stragglers. However, when I got up in the middle of the night and turned on the light in the bathroom, there were immediately a couple of dozen of them milling (Is that where they get their name?) around the light.

This afternoon before we set off, I had to put the box with the hibachi and all the BBQ stuff in the trailer cupboard. Before that I had to eject a couple of hundred moths from the crevices in the box--inside the BBQ, under the folds of the lid, in the rag, inside the book of matches, etc., etc. Of course, Jim had to share his photo blind with them, and shake them out of the folds before putting the blind in the truck. The truck stands open all day, so I suppose it's full of them, too, although only a few came forth when we drove up to Ft. Morgan this afternoon. Wait until we go for a drive at night sometime. Of course, they're really quite harmless, but still annoying.

Last night we heard on the news that Phoenix had been 122° and Los Angeles, 112° yesterday, so there doesn't seem to be anyplace that is not sweltering. Even the mountains aren't much cooler. We think maybe we'll set out for home tomorrow. I wonder if Huntington Beach is cooler than L.A.

Two hours later

Just heard on the TV that it was 102° in Denver today--and of course broke the record for the date! It tied the record for June.

Taos Valley RV Park, Taos, NM

4:45 p.m., June 28, 1990

This morning dawned warm and still quite windy. Usually it cools off at night, and the mornings are calm. We decided that birding in the South Platte riparian area just north of Ft. Morgan wouldn't be any fun. Besides the park where we were staying had a 10:00 a.m. check-out time. So we left for our drive home as soon as we had had breakfast--around 6:30 a.m. We (or rather, I, for I do the navigating and Jim goes along with the program) decided not to take the freeway. Instead we drove 10 miles east to Brush, then south on SR 71. This road traverses the state about half way between the Rockies and the eastern border. In 150 miles I think fewer than 10 cars passed us, and we passed none. Just south of Rocky Ford, we headed southwest on SR 10. Here we passed two vehicles which were straining on upgrades.

Highway 71 went through the center of Limon, which was devastated by the tornado a few weeks ago. We were aware that we were approaching the town a mile or two north, because we started seeing large pieces of metal strewn all over the fields. Many of them looked like parts of farm grain storage structures, made out of aluminum or galvanized iron.

The road went south and entered the town at the east end, turned right and went through it from east to west, then headed on south near the west border of the town. The east end of the town seemed to be unscathed, but the main downtown area had many buildings totally collapsed. Some looked as though they had been removed already. The place has fewer than 2000 residents, but is the only town for miles around where ranchers can shop. That twister really couldn't have touched down in a worse spot!

The land along the road has mostly open range with cattle grazing. Some of it looks overgrazed, and some seems OK. There is a little wheat, but I think the lack of water discourages much of that. We passed lots of ponds which were dry, and all of them were way down.

Rocky Ford is supposed to be famous for its melons, but as we drove through that area, nary a melon patch did we see. I wonder where they grow them. The town is in the Arkansas River valley, so farming was evident there, but most of what we saw growing was alfalfa.

We headed southwest toward Walsenburg, watching the land change from gently rolling to a bit more hilly as the road ascended into the foothills. Junipers and an occasional pinyon started appearing in the little valleys.

After lunch for us and the truck, we took US 160 into the mountains, then headed due south at Ft. Garland for Taos.

We're in a campground two or three miles south of town. Jim did not unhook the trailer from the truck, because his back is bothering him. He threw it out a few days ago, as he does every few months. Sitting on a log--he broke his chair--in his blind at Crow Valley Campground for hours on end without any back support did not help it either.

Because we did not unhook, I guess we'll have to eat dinner here in the trailer. I'd love a nice Mexican meal, but wouldn't consider asking him to unhook.

The altitude here is about 7000 ft. It's hot despite the fact that the afternoon clouds have gathered. I suspect it's around 90°, or was when we arrived an hour and a half ago. The TV news

said it was 102° in Albuquerque today, but that's much lower.

Black Bart's RV Park, Flagstaff, AZ

5:00 p.m., June 29, 1990

We got an early start and drove all day. Although the temperature was high, clouds in the afternoon aided the truck's A/C. According to the TV news, the temperature of 93° today tied the record for the date in Flagstaff. So what did they expect, with us coming?

As we were driving south from Taos to Santa Fe, we passed many homes and small businesses. It was hard to tell whether they were owned by Indian or by artisan/hippie types. We were amused by the business combinations offered on some of the signs:

Winery - Pottery

Silver Smith - Colonial Furniture

Car & Truck Repair - Notary Public

We had lunch in Virgie's Mexican Restaurant in Gallup--not bad, but not great.

When we got into our campsite here in Flagstaff, I immediately heard Cassin's Kingbirds hysterically crying their "ch-beer, ch-beer, ch-beer, ch-beer." We soon found what the trouble was. A juvenile bird had left the nest prematurely. It could not fly and was flopping around on the ground in the site behind ours. The nest was impossibly high, but Jim caught the little thing and put it on a low branch of a Ponderosa Pine. However, the bird was soon back on the ground. He put it back once again, and I don't know where it is now. I doubt it will make it, though, for we see no sign of the parents feeding it. They just fly around and scream for it to come to them. Of course, it can't, because it cannot fly yet.

Other birds around here are Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco and Mountain Chickadee. Also very near is the noisy freeway, so we're not tempted to linger here more than one night.

7:15 p.m., same day

I just realized that the place where we are staying qualifies as another incongruous combination of business enterprises:

RV Park - Steak House/Dinner Theater - Antique Store

We just had dinner in the steak house, and it was very good. Steak was excellent. They hire a bunch of college kids for the summer to serve as combination waiters/waitresses and entertainers. They sing solos and as a chorus, along with serving the meals. They sing nice music, and do it well, ranging from honky tonk to older musical comedy favorites. The only problem was it was much too loud. We had to ask for a different table, and the first one was nowhere near the source of the music. What those young people are doing to their hearing by working even one summer in a place like that is really a shame.

Last night when Jim lit the water heater, he complained that it did not fire up with the usual roar. This morning when he turned it off, he observed that the chamber was all sooty. I suggested that perhaps one of those infernal moths was clogging up the air intake hole for the burner. This afternoon before lighting it, Jim checked, and sure enough, that was the problem. We're still finding the things, but many of them seem less active than they were. Each evening fewer of them emerge from their hiding places, but I'm quite sure we haven't found the very last one yet.

Home

6:45 p.m., June 30, 1990

Home! All through the last hot day's drive we kept telling ourselves, "It won't be long until we feel that wonderful Huntington Beach sea breeze." Sure enough, when we got out of the truck, there it was in our faces.

This morning in Flagstaff the temperature was probably around 70° It was overcast all night and sort of muggy--a tropical thing drifting up from off Mexico's coast. We drove to the California border under that overcast, so, although it was getting hotter and hotter, the A/C did the job. However, as we crossed the California desert, there was little cloudiness, and it was hot! We stopped for lunch in Ludlow (50 miles east of Barstow), and the blast of hot air that hit us as we emerged from the truck must have been 120° or more in the sun. We had thought we would stay in Barstow, but we got such an early start this morning that we decided to drive on home.

So--here we are, three days earlier than we thought we would be here. We still have regrets about leaving Crow Valley Campground in the Pawnee Nat. Grasslands. We know if we had stayed a couple more days, Jim could have attracted several more species to his water. He was getting nibbles from Orchard Orioles and Blue Grosbeaks. But, we couldn't take the heat! (Jim says to say it was only me!)

Home

July 2, 1990

This morning, as I cleaned the trailer, a few more moths flew out of the corners, but with little vigor.

CAMPGROUNDS

5/29-5/30	Beaver Canyon Cpgd., Beaver, UT
5/31	Colorado NM, nr. Grand Junction, CO
6/1-6/2	Shady Creek RV Park, Cedaredge, CO
6/3-6/4	Black Cyn. of the Gunnison NM, S Rim, CO
6/5-6/7	Brown's Camp, Nathrop, CO
6/8-6/10	Mountain Meadow Camp, Empire, CO
6/11-6/12	Kelly-Dahl Forest Service Cpgd., nr. Nederland, CO
6/13-6/14	Mary's Lake Camp, Estes Park, CO
6/15-6/26	Pioneer Mobile Home Park, Ft. Collins, CO
6/24-6/26	Crow Valley Cpgd., Pawnee National. Grassland, nr. Briggsdale, CO
6/27	Wayward Wind Cpgd., Ft. Morgan, CO
6/28	Taos Valley RV Park, Taos, NM
6/29	Black Bart's Camp, Flagstaff, AZ