

# Platte River Cranes: A Migration Spectacular Species List | March 10 – 16, 2024 with Naturalist Journeys



**Compiled by guide Kent Skaggs. Our clients included Ellen, Betty & Bill, Sharon & Bob and Larry**

**Summary:** Nature enthusiasts from Delaware, Kansas, North Carolina and Oregon traveled to south-central Nebraska to witness one of the last great wildlife migrations on the planet. The annual spring staging of migrating Sandhill Cranes along the Platte River near Kearney, NE provides the opportunity to see tens of thousands of cranes as well as several other bird species during the month of March. To view what was seen during the tour, click on the eBird Trip Report link provided or scan through the list below.

[Platte River Cranes | March 10-16, 2024 | eBird Trip Report](#)

**Family or Species Common Name: Scientific Name - 68 species total, with 2 species which were heard only (HO)**

**(I) = Introduced**

## **DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: ANATIDAE (19)**

**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens* — Small numbers were seen each day at multiple locations.

**Ross's Goose** *Anser rossii* — Three were seen at Rowe Sanctuary and at the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program's (PRRIP) sandpit.

**Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii* — Two were seen at Cottonmill Park west of Kearney.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* — Seen each day at multiple locations.

**Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* — A male and female were seen at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors* — A pair was seen at Spring Creek Prairie, the wetland south of Ravenna and at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout.

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* — Seen at multiple locations with a high count of approximately 50 at the Alma Wastewater Treatment Ponds (WTP).

**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit, the wetland south of Ravenna and at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana* — Seen at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout and on the PRRIP sandpit.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* — Seen at multiple locations with the highest numbers seen from the Crane Trust viewing blind.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* — Seen along the Platte River at Rowe Sanctuary and the Crane Trust and on the PRRIP sandpit.

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca* — Seen at multiple locations.

**Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* — Five were seen at the Alma WTP.

**Redhead** *Aythya americana* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit, a small pond west of Kearney and at the Alma WTP.  
**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit and the Alma WTP.  
**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit and the Alma WTP.  
**Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit, from the dam at Harlan County Reservoir, the Alma WTP and at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout.  
**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* — Seen from the dam at Harlan County Reservoir and at the Alma WTP.  
**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* — Seen at the Alma WTP.

### **PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (3)**

**Wild Turkey** *Meleagris gallopavo* — (HO) Heard at Cottonmill Park.  
**Greater Prairie-Chicken** *Tympanuchus cupido* — Five males and one female seen on a lek near Ravenna.  
**Ring-necked Pheasant (1)** *Phasianus colchicus* — Seen at Rowe Sanctuary and Prairie Dog Waterfowl Production Area (WPA).

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (3)**

**Rock Pigeon (1)** *Columba livia* — Seen at multiple locations.  
**Eurasian Collared-Dove (1)** *Streptopelia decaocto* — Seen at multiple locations.  
**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* — Seen at Rowe Sanctuary and while traveling.

### **RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (1)**

**American Coot** *Fulica americana* — Seen on the PRRIP sandpit and at Harlan County Reservoir.

### **CRANES: Gruidae (1)**

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* — Seen everyday with largest concentrations seen at Rowe Sanctuary and the Crane Trust.

### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (1)**

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* — Seen every day at multiple locations.

### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (1)**

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* — Seen on the river at the Crane Trust, Rowe Sanctuary and from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

### **GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (1)**

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie, Cottonmill Park and the Crane Trust.

### **CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (1)**

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Nannopterum auritum* — Seen in flight south of Kearney along the interstate.

### **PELICANS: Pelecanidae (1)**

**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* — A flock of 25 were seen flying low over the river from the Crane Trust blind and five were seen from the dam at Harlan County Reservoir.

### **HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (6)**

**Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius* — One seen flying over the prairie-chicken lek and two seen flying near the

river from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** *Accipiter striatus* — Two seen riding a thermal near the PRRIP sandpit.

**Cooper's Hawk** *Accipiter cooperii* — Seen at Cottonmill Park and from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

**Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* — Seen at multiple locations, most often near water.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* — Seen every day at multiple locations.

**Ferruginous Hawk** *Buteo regalis* — Single bird seen at Clark WPA.

#### **KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (1)**

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megasceryle alcyon* — One heard then seen from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

#### **WOODPECKERS: Picidae (4)**

**Red-bellied Woodpecker** *Melanerpes carolinus* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie.

**Downy Woodpecker** *Dryobates pubescens* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie and Cottonmill Park.

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Dryobates villosus* — Seen at Cottonmill Park.

**Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* — Heard and seen at multiple locations.

#### **FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (1)**

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* — Seen in flight on the east side of Kearney while returning from the prairie-chicken lek.

#### **TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (2)**

**Eastern Phoebe** *Sayornis phoebe* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie.

**Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya* — Seen along Kilgore Road just east of the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail.

#### **CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (1)**

**American Crow** *Corvus brachyrhynchos* — Seen at the Rowe Sanctuary pond viewing pullout.

#### **LARKS: Alaudidae (1)**

**Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* — Seen north of Funk WPA.

#### **NUTHATCHES: Sittidae (2)**

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis* — Heard then seen at Cottonmill Park.

**White-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta carolinensis* — Seen at Cottonmill Park and heard at Rowe Sanctuary.

#### **STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)**

**European Starling (I)** *Sturnus vulgaris* — Seen at multiple locations.

#### **THRUSHES: Turdidae (2)**

**Eastern Bluebird** *Sialia sialis* — (HO) Heard at Spring Creek Prairie.

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* — Seen at multiple locations.

#### **WAXWINGS: Bombycillidae (1)**

**Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum* — Seen at Cottonmill Park feeding cedar berries.

#### **OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae (1)**

**House Sparrow (I)** *Passer domesticus* — Seen at multiple locations, primarily in towns.

### **PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae (1)**

**American Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* — A flock of around 30 were seen in a field south of Kearney.

### **FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae (1)**

**House Finch** *Haemorhous mexicanus* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie and Cottonmill Park.

### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (3)**

**American Tree Sparrow** *Spizelloides arborea* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie and near Funk WPA.

**Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* — Seen at Cottonmill Park and around Harlan County Reservoir.

**Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia* — Seen and heard from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES: Icteridae (6)**

**Western Meadowlark** *Sturnella neglecta* — Seen at multiple locations.

**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna* — Heard then seen at Spring Creek Prairie.

**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* — Seen at multiple locations.

**Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* — Seen at the Rowe Sanctuary pond pullout perched in a tree.

**Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula* — Some seen with the cowbirds at the Rowe Sanctuary pond pullout and from the Fort Kearney Hike-Bike Trail bridge.

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus* — Seen near some fast food restaurants while driving into York.

### **CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS AND ALLIES: Cardinalidae (1)**

**Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie, Cottonmill Park and along the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail.

### **MAMMALS (7)**

**Muskrat** *Ondatra zibethicus* — One seen at Spring Creek Prairie.

**Fox Squirrel** *Sciurus niger* — Seen at Cottonmill Park and along the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail.

**Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel** *Ictidomys tridecemlineatus* — Seen peeking out of its hole in a gravel road north of Clark WPA.

**Black-tailed Prairie Dog** *Cynomys ludovicianus* — Seen at Prairie Dog WPA and Clark WPA.

**Plains Pocket Gopher** *Geomys bursarius* — Seen pushing dirt out of its tunnel on S Rd in Kearney County south of Kearney.

**Eastern Cottontail** *Sylvilagus virginianus* — Seen at Rowe Sanctuary and while driving south of Ravenna.

**White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus* — Seen at Spring Creek Prairie, the Crane Trust and from the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail bridge.