

[evergreenaudubon.org](https://www.evergreenaudubon.org)

## Eastern Plains Trip Enjoyed by Bash Raffle Winners – Evergreen Audubon

3-4 minutes



A perfect first weekend in May was had with Brad Andres and Heather Johnson on the ENC Bash Raffle trip to the eastern Colorado plains with Donald Randall and Carmon Slater. The weather was warm with a slight breeze, so was quite comfortable both days. And true to migration season, some birds you might expect had already probably gone through, while others had just arrived, which always makes spring birding a joyful surprise. We were able to tally 109 species over the two days.

One of the first stops at Ireland Reservoir provided the spectacular sight of The Dance of the Western Grebes, plus

seeing masses of Yellow-headed Blackbirds, when you are used to feeling lucky to spot one or two. And who needs binoculars when you have the advantage of Brad's keen ears. In Beebe Draw, he heard the spiral approach of a Snipe, when we started laughing and telling snipe jokes. Then lo and behold, one landed on a nearby fence post and Heather was able to get really close to garner some excellent photographs and a video with her cell phone. Another small pond provided a good look at swirling Wilson's Phalaropes. Brad's favorite sighting, being the shorebird expert and enthusiast he is, was a small group of Wimbrels that flew in and landed, again providing excellent viewing.

A delicious lunch at Jackson State Park was followed by a short hike to check things out, when a beautiful flock of Cedar Waxwings was spotted feasting on Russian Olives. So that invasive tree species just might have some purpose. Upon leaving the water bird sites, we took a closer look at, what looked like a tree stump amidst an isolated small grouping of cottonwoods, and it was a huge Great Horned Owl sitting at the base of one of them. Then a nest was spotted in one of the other trees, and there was the other parent feeding two large teenaged owlets whose down was starting to turn into contour feathers.

As we headed further north with habitat change, we did see our state bird, the Lark Bunting. Between the prairie and riparian habitats that followed, we did see several Baltimore Orioles and Eastern Phoebes, a fleeting Great-crested Flycatcher, and lots of Lark, Clay-colored, Field, and Whitecrowned Sparrows. Other nice sightings were a Black-bellied Plover, a Blackcrowned Night-Heron, and a gorgeous, up close, Upland Sandpiper.

What better way to celebrate our 45th anniversary than seeing lots of beautiful birds and sharing laughter and stimulating conversation with dear friends. A memory of a life time was had with Brad and Heather.

(Note: Cheers to Evergreen Audubon and many thanks to Heather Johnson and Brad Andres for donating this super two-day birding trip to Northeast Colorado to the Evergreen Audubon Bash raffle. –Donald Randall)