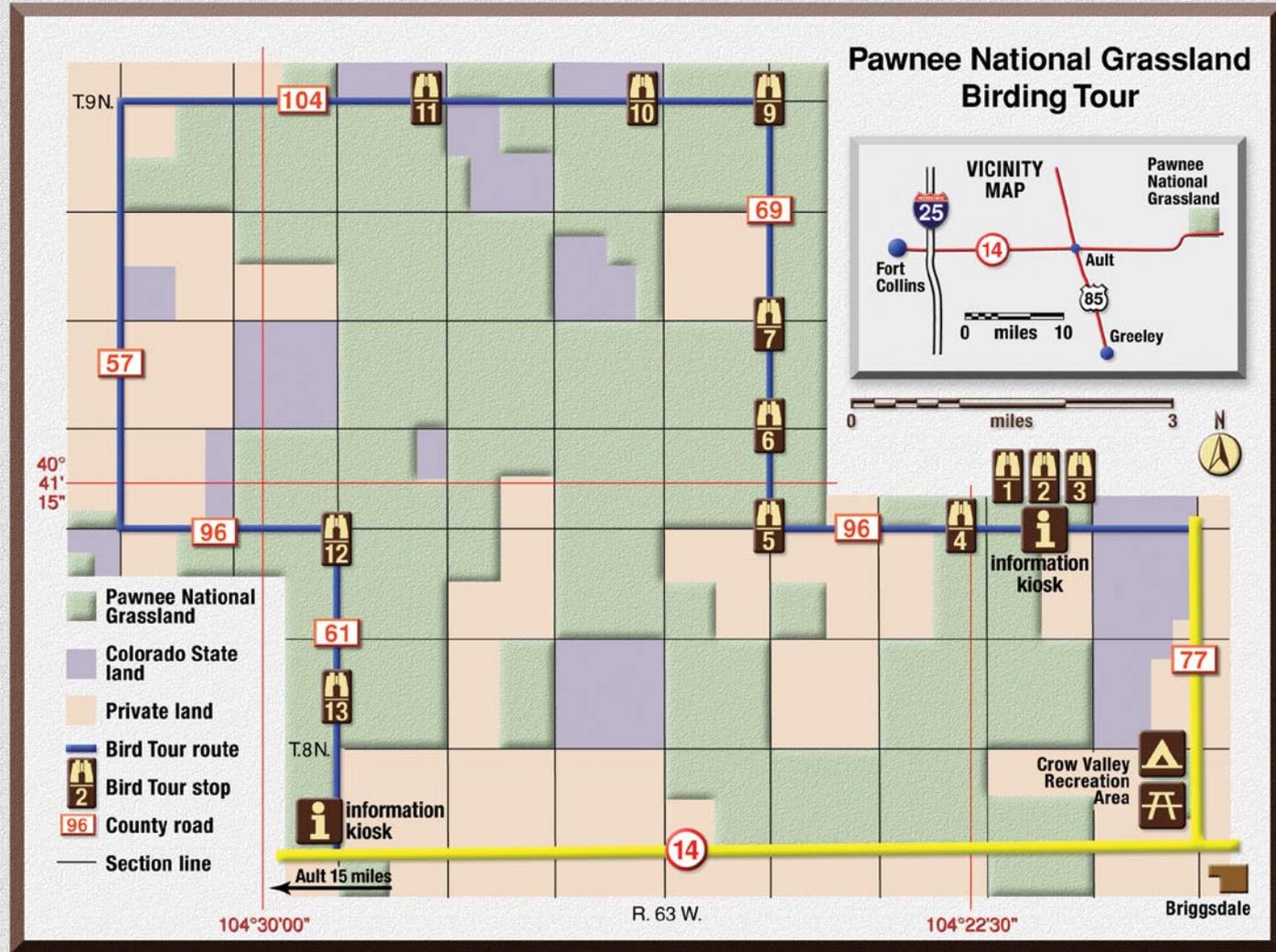


## Welcome!

We invite you to explore the Pawnee National Grassland and observe the many species of birds who make their homes here year-round and seasonally.

The Pawnee National Grassland Self-Guided Birding Tour is approximately 21 miles long and passes through a variety of bird habitats. A leisurely tour takes approximately two to three hours by car.

Horned Larks, small sparrow-like birds, are abundant year-round. Lark Buntings, the Colorado state bird, are common in spring and summer. Resident raptors (Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Golden Eagles) are often seen. Swainson's Hawks can be seen in spring and summer, while Rough-legged Hawks are only here in winter.



The Pawnee National Grassland in northeast Weld County is intermingled with private land and consists of 193,060 acres administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Maps are sold at local Forest Service offices. A bird checklist is available at the Pawnee District Office or on the web. Motorized travel on the Grassland is restricted to numbered roads. Look for brown carsonite posts with white numbers to identify Forest Service roads. Weld County uses green and white signs to number its roads.

## Where to begin?

The included map will direct you through the tour. Please note the tour is on gravel roads.

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #1  
#2  
#3

Scan the area north and south of the road for Long-billed Curlews. They occasionally nest on the Grassland when ponds (playas) are filled in wet years. As you leave Stop 1, make sure to look for Loggerhead Shrikes, American Kestrels and Mourning Doves typically found perched on telephone wires, fence posts and trees. Shrikes may be recognized by their undulating (flap-flap-closed wing drop-flap-flap) flight pattern.



American Kestrel

© Lee Farrell

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #4

Watch for Burrowing Owls perched on a fence or in the vicinity of prairie dog towns. While traveling to Stop 5, check the fence line for different species of Sparrows (Savannah, Grasshopper and Cassin's).



Burrowing Owls

© Lee Farrell

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #5

The Lark Bunting is especially noted for its courtship behavior. Known as "larking," the birds fly upward, then plummet in dramatic fashion while singing their distinctive song. Several other prairie bird species share this behavior.



Lark Bunting

© Bill Miller

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #6

Swainson's Hawks need grassland for hunting and trees for nesting. Look west to see a grove of trees; this is an enclosure for wildlife habitat. Birds and wildlife, in addition to nesting and burrowing space, often need taller vegetation for refuge.



Swainson's Hawk

© Lee Farrell

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #7

Loggerhead Shrikes are found where shrubs and trees grow near open grassland. An abandoned homestead with a windmill to the west has a windbreak that provides nest sites for birds.



Loggerhead Shrike

© Lee Farrell

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #8

Stop 8 has been dropped from the tour.

BIRDING TOUR  
STOP #9

A population of Mountain Plovers and McCown's Longspurs may be observed at this stop.



Check for Mountain Plovers in prairie dog towns. They prefer short grass. The Pawnee National Grassland is a major nesting ground for Mountain Plovers.

© Bill Miller

**BIRDING TOUR**  
**STOP #10**

A small dirt dam constructed during the 1930s or 1940s to control flooding, reduce soil erosion and provide water for livestock is to the southwest. The pond behind the dam attracts a variety of water birds. Phalaropes, Long-billed Curlews, ducks, teals and others have been sighted when water is abundant. Check drainages for Rock Wrens as you travel to Stop 11.



*Green-winged Teal*

© Lee Farrell

**BIRDING TOUR**  
**STOP #11**

Where the terrain flattens, check for ground-nesting Chestnut-collared Longspurs. The population of these birds is declining. Their larking behavior is spectacular. On the way to Stop 12, check fence and telephone posts for American Kestrels and Swainson's Hawks.



*Chestnut-collared Longspur*

© Lee Farrell

**BIRDING TOUR**  
**STOP #12**

Raptors frequent this area, check fence and telephone posts. Binoculars and scopes are handy here. Swainson's Hawks, Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks could be sighted.



*Red-tailed Hawk*

© Lee Farrell

**BIRDING TOUR**  
**STOP #13**

Prairie dog towns are homes to Burrowing Owls, who use abandoned burrows to raise their young. The best time to see them is early morning or late afternoon. Also look for Long-billed Curlews.



*Long-billed Curlew*

© Ron Harden

### Viewing Ethics

To continue to provide excellent birding opportunities, the Grassland asks for your cooperation and support to protect wildlife. Please remember to:

- Keep your distance. Binoculars and scopes allow you to get a good view without getting too close.
- Respect nesting sites and dens. Well meaning but intrusive visitors can cause parents to flee, leaving young animals vulnerable.
- Stay on roads and trails where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

### Visiting and Viewing Tips

To make the most out of your trip to the Grassland, make sure to plan ahead. This is a remote location and gasoline and water sources are limited.

- Carry water and pay attention to the weather forecast.
- Bring a field guide for the area.
- Good binoculars and a spotting scope and tripod are very useful.
- Be patient! Take your time and scan the area carefully.
- Early morning, late afternoon, and early evening are best for viewing.
- May and June are the best months to see the widest variety of species.
- We encourage you to visit the Crow Valley Recreation Area for another bird viewing opportunity.



*Western Meadowlark*

© Lee Farrell



*Northern Harrier*

© Lee Farrell



*Mourning Dove*

© Lee Farrell

The Forest Service thanks the Audubon Society of Greater Denver ([www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org)) and Fort Collins [Colorado] Audubon ([www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)) for their generous assistance in the production of this publication.

We also wish to thank professional photographer Lee Farrell (<http://leel3.smugmug.com>) for the use of so many of his truly remarkable photographs of the birds of the Pawnee National Grassland. In addition, the photographs of Bill Miller and Ron Harden are greatly appreciated.

The Forest Service also thanks Ann Copeland and Richard "Dick" Maxfield for their support of birding on the Grassland.

For further information contact the Pawnee National Grassland office at 660 "O" Street, Greeley, CO 80631, 970-346-5000, [www.fs.usda.gov/arp](http://www.fs.usda.gov/arp).

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# Pawnee National Grassland Birding Tour

A Self-guided Road Tour for Viewing the Birds of the Pawnee National Grassland



*American Kestrel*

© Lee Farrell

