

Summary of field trip to Box Canyon, 23 August 2025

General Leaders: Catherine and Joe Ortega

Special Guest Leader for Box Canyon: Sue Hirshman

Participants: Andrea Avantaggio, Kelly Miller, Michael Mullally, Makenna Reilly, Kathy Schuetz, Katy Shirley, and Kay Simpson.



Areas covered: Box Canyon, Cascade Falls, and Amphitheater Campground

This field trip was focused almost entirely on Black Swifts, which is why the list of other birds is relatively small. The trip was inspired by Carolyn Gunn's excellent presentation on Black Swifts at our May meeting. Sue showed us all six Black Swift nests that are currently active. There had been eight nests earlier in the season, but two failed for unknown reasons. Sue has been working on Black Swifts at Box Canyon for 29 years (!), so she was able to share with us the history of the colony as well as some aspects of their breeding biology.

We finished up our time with Sue in the park office, where we looked at a couple albums of beautiful photos. It is not easy to take photos of the swifts at Box Canyon because it is dark, and flash photograph is not permitted. We are grateful to Sue for sharing her knowledge and expertise as well as for sharing her time with us. THANK YOU SUE!

We enjoyed a picnic lunch and stopped briefly at Cascade Falls and the USFS Amphitheater Campground. On the way back to Durango, we got delayed by a motorcycle that went off Red Mountain Pass. What AI had to say:

As of the afternoon of Saturday, August 23, 2025, Red Mountain Pass on US-550 is closed in both directions near Ouray, Colorado, due to a motorcycle crash. There is no estimated time for reopening.

Road conditions

- **Closure:** The pass is closed in both directions near Bear Creek Falls at mile marker 90, approximately five miles south of Ouray.
- **Alternate routes:** Motorists are advised to seek alternate routes. Options between Ouray and Silverton include Colorado Highway 145 through Telluride.

Lucky for us, we were delayed for only 30-ish minutes.

Birds seen on trip:

Black Swift
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Northern Goshawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Western Wood-Pewee
Steller's Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee

Mountain Chickadee
White-breasted Nuthatch
Townsend's Solitaire
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Cassin's Finch
Pine Siskin
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Western Tanager

Some birds were seen during the drive and not seen by everyone.

A few fun photos:



Michael and Sue



Catherine and Sue



Kelly and Sue



Katy and Andrea with Sue



Kay and Sue



Joe and Sue



We all received a merit badge!



Sue sharing photographs and history.

[Link to camera on nest](#)

Thank you, all, for your participation.