

Crane Viewing - 2017

When viewing the cranes, please maintain a respectful distance and observe private property boundaries. Please remember, these are wild, migratory birds and don't always behave in a predictable manner.

The cranes roost at night in or near the Yampa and Elk Rivers west of Steamboat Springs. They fly out from their night roost at sunrise and head to nearby grain fields or wetland meadows. They will feed for several hours, then around 9:30-10:30 a.m. they return to the river to rest; a few cranes may continue to feed in fields for most of the day. Around 4:30 p.m. the cranes will fly out from the river and head back to the fields for another round of feeding. They return to the river shortly before or right after sunset.

We have been scouting the cranes' preferred feeding and roosting areas. The following are driving directions for crane viewing on your own. The shuttles for guided crane viewing sessions might visit some of these locations but private vehicles are not permitted to follow the festival crane viewing shuttles. Please refer to the Crane Viewing Policy letter at the end of these directions for additional information.

Printed copies of these directions will be available at Festival Headquarters (Bud Werner Memorial Library) in Steamboat and at The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch in Hayden. [Click here](#) to print your own copy of the driving directions and instructions.

2017 CRANE VIEWING LOCATIONS

Directions from Festival Headquarters at Bud Werner Memorial Library - Steamboat Springs

(Areas where cranes have been seen, but no guarantee! ** = **most consistently seen**)

IMPORTANT- Most of the cranes are staging on private property. Please respect the cranes by keeping your distance and respect private property owners by not trespassing. Unless you know that you are on public land, please view cranes from the side of the road. Always use caution when driving and exiting your car to observe cranes.

****CR 42 and CR 44** – Drive west on US Hwy 40 for 3.5 miles. Turn right onto CR 42. Look for cranes in agricultural fields on both sides of the road. CR 42 becomes a dirt road after the Silver Spur subdivision. Cranes often roost in the river which is on the left before the “T” intersection with CR 44. Look for cranes in the fields behind the ranch with the “crane gates.” **Do NOT go down this driveway.** At CR 44 turn left and look for cranes in the meadows, especially opposite High Tide Ranch, 39765 CR 44, and in the meadows of the Zabel Ranch. CR 44 runs from Hwy 40 on the south to CR 129 on the north. If you turn right from CR 42 on to CR 44, look for cranes in the wet fields and along the river. Usually cranes are not seen past the cemetery.

****69A** - Drive west on US Hwy 40 for 21.2 miles. You will pass the Hayden Station Power Plant and the Yampa Valley Regional Airport. Take the first right turn (north) after the airport sign onto CR 69. Proceed less than 1/4 mile and turn left (north) onto CR 69A. Drive to the end of the road. Park and walk to the viewing pad somewhat hidden in trees. Look north and west in the fields near the Yampa River. (Best at sunrise & sunset when the cranes are flying to and from their roost sites in the river, but cranes are often seen at other times of the day as well.) Note: This site is listed on page 22 of the Northwestern Colorado Birding Trail Guide.

****Yampa Valley Regional Airport (CR 51)** – From Steamboat, take Highway 40 past the Hayden Station Power Plant and Carpenter Ranch. Turn left (south) at sign for Yampa Valley Regional Airport (CR 51). Look for cranes in fields to the west after sunrise and before sunset. Continue along the airport access road (51A), looking for cranes in the fields to the north. When you are opposite the Galaxy Aviation building, look north for cranes in the distant fields by the airport after sunrise and before sunset. Continue on the same road past the airport until it rejoins Hwy. 40.

****Hayden “Speedway”** - Drive west on US Hwy 40 to the Town of Hayden. Turn left at Poplar Street (24.5 miles from Steamboat). Poplar St. becomes CR 53 after passing the Routt County Fairgrounds. Continue on CR 53 past the “speedway” (a bunch of old tires and a dirt track) to the ‘T’ intersection with CR 37. Turn left and continue on this road for several miles (it becomes the Haul Road). Look for cranes in all the adjacent fields, especially the cut wheat fields. Eventually the road will meet up with County Road 27. Turn left on CR 27 to get back to US Highway 40.

****CR 70 (Morgan Bottom Rd)** – Drive west on US Hwy 40 for 18.4 miles. Make a slight right turn onto Routt County Road 70 (also known as Morgan Bottom Road). If you go over the railroad tracks on US Hwy 40, you have gone a little too far. RCR 70 is a gravel road. Cranes have been seen all along this road, but mainly in the alfalfa and wheat field surrounding 12565 CR 70. This is a prime location for viewing pronghorn antelope, deer and elk, both morning and evening.

Stokes Gulch - - Drive west on US Hwy 40 to the Town of Hayden. Turn left at Poplar Street (24.5 miles from Steamboat). Proceed for 1.9 miles (Poplar St. becomes CR 53 after passing the Routt County Fairgrounds) until you get to CR 59. Turn right on CR 59 and proceed 2.3 miles, just past CR 61. Cranes have been seen in the fields here in past years.

Hawthorne St. - Drive west on US Highway 40 past the airport. Turn left (south) at Hawthorne St. (if you get to the town of Hayden, you’ve gone too far) and continue up Hawthorne St for .4 mile. Turn right into the entrance for the Valley View Business Park and check wheat fields on the opposite side of Hawthorne Street.

Yampa River State Park (State Park sticker needed to park here)- Drive west on US Hwy 40 through the Town of Hayden. Continue west approximately 2.3 miles; turn left (south) into the Yampa River State Park. (Must have a State Parks pass – daily or annual – to park here). Park in back lot by picnic shelter. Look for two-track “road” going west from the parking lot.

Walk along the two track “road” passing tepees for approximately 400 feet (trail joins a gravel trail; stay left). At the fence and blind area, look to the meadow to the west for cranes.

Murphy’s Field - Drive west on US Hwy 40 through the Town of Hayden. Approximately 3 miles past Hayden, just past mile marker 104, look for a turn-off on your left (south). CAUTION- there is no sign or marker designating this turn-off and it comes up quickly! (Wild Life Zone sign is evident on opposite side of highway from where you turn.) Park in the small parking area and look in the surrounding fields.

Yampa River State Wildlife Area – - Located south off of Highway 40 near the western border of Routt County. There are several entrances to this State Wildlife Area where cranes have been seen sporadically. The eastern-most entrance is just west of mile marker 102 and across from the rest area.

CRANE VIEWING POLICY

Dear Crane Festival Attendee,

We ask your understanding and cooperation regarding our guided crane viewing policy. Much of our guided crane viewing takes place on private property. We are allowed to bring our shuttles on to these properties but not private cars. We have worked hard to establish good relationships with these private property owners and need to respect their request to minimize the human impact on their land. In addition, we have safety concerns about private cars following the shuttles to their destinations. Therefore, except for Saturday night following the Carpenter Ranch picnic, private cars will not be permitted to follow the festival crane viewing shuttles.

Thank you for helping to keep our cranes and our attendees safe and for respecting our crane-friendly private property owners.

Sincerely,
Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc.