

# Crane Viewing Locations in the Yampa Valley

(updated August 2023)



The following are driving directions for crane viewing on your own. These are areas where cranes have been seen, but there is no guarantee!

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. If you have pets, please leave them at home or in the car. (For the complete list of our Ethical Birding Guidelines go to: <https://coloradocranes.org/ethical-birding-guidelines/>)

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. 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.

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

## Directions from Festival Headquarters at Bud Werner Memorial Library, Steamboat Springs (\*\* = most consistently seen)

**\*\*CR 42 and CR 44** – Cranes are more often seen on CR42 than CR44. Drive west on US Hwy 40 for 3.5 miles. Turn right onto CR 42. Continue on CR 42 past the Silver Spur subdivision. As you head west on CR 42, look for cranes in the fields on both sides of the road, and especially in the fields opposite Marabou Ranch on the south side of CR 42. Admire the driveway with the “crane gates” but please, **do not go down this driveway**. Cranes often roost in the Elk River which is on the left before the “T” intersection with CR 44. CR 44 runs from Hwy 40 on the south to CR 129 on the north. At the intersection of CR 42 and CR 44, turn left or right on to CR 44. If you turn left (south) look for cranes in the meadows, especially opposite High Tide Ranch, 39765 CR 44, and in the meadows of the Zabel Ranch. If you turn right (north) on CR 44, look for cranes on the right (east) just past the intersection with CR 46. Usually cranes are not seen past the cemetery on CR 44.

**\*\*CR 70 (Morgan Bottom Rd)** – Drive west on US Hwy 40 for 18.4 miles. Make a slight right turn onto 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. CR 70 is a gravel road. Cranes have been seen all along this road, mainly near the wheat field next to the driveway of the TS Jost Ranch



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(12565 CR 70). Cranes can also be seen in the fields south and north of CR 80 on the Flanders Ranch (slightly west of where CR 70 joins CR 80) and where the road bends sharply to the south. Look for the pull off for the Flanders Wildlife Area. This road is a prime area for viewing pronghorn antelope, deer and elk, as well as cranes, both morning and evening.

**\*\*Crane Sanctuary, CR 37 & Haul Road** – Drive west on US Hwy 40 towards the town of Hayden. Turn left at Hawthorn Street (just before you reach the town). This becomes CR 37 after passing the subdivision on your right. Stop along the road just before the pull off to the Sage Creek Trail and look west up the hill to the wheat fields for cranes. This area is our new **Crane Sanctuary** where we are specifically growing crops for cranes. Best as a scope view.

Continue on CR 37 until you reach the spot where you must curve left or right. If you go left, you will continue on CR 37. Look for cranes in the wheat fields to the west. If you go right, you will be on the Haul Road (unmarked). Drive along the Haul Road and look for cranes in the wheat fields to the south of the road.

**Intersection of Hawthorne and Valley View Business Park, Hayden** – Drive west on US Hwy 40 past the turn off to Yampa Valley Regional Airport and continue toward the town of Hayden. Turn left at Hawthorne (before you get to downtown Hayden) and drive a short distance past Crandell Av. Turn right into the Valley View Business Park. Park on the side of the road just past the intersection and look for cranes in the wheat field across the street from Hawthorn (east side of road). From there, continue on Hawthorne which becomes CR 37. Follow CR 37 and look for cranes in the wheat fields along the road.

**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.

**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. Cranes have also been seen along Hwy 40 near mile marker 104 in the fields to the south (there are no large pull-offs on this section of Hwy 40).

**Hwy 13 in Craig** – 41180 N HWY 13, Craig, CO 81625. The Moon family is participating in our Crops for Cranes program and they welcome you to come out and view cranes on their property. In addition to supporting cranes, they own and operate Yampa Valley Fiberworks. You can visit their mill and store which features beautiful, useable yarn products. Visit their website at <https://www.yampavalleyfiberworks.com> for more information and directions to their property.



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