

MAMMAL WATCHING IN QUEENSLAND

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2008

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Dr. Dave Redfield and I drove from Brisbane to Iron Range in Cape York attempting to see as many of Dave's target mammals as possible. We were remarkably successful eventually finishing with a total trip list of 70 species. I would especially like to thank friends Jon Hall and David James for the scoop on many useful sites. Jon's mammal watching website is especially useful and highly recommended.

15 August: I made it through to Brisbane to rendezvous with Dave. Navigating out of the city we headed west to Toowoomba and checked into our hotel. It was a freezing cold day by Queensland standards with gale force winds. In the late afternoon we drove out to Perseverance Dam, 8 km E Pechey arriving about 4pm. We quickly found **Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies** (6) loafing on the land side dam wall and enjoyed great scope views. Driving on towards Ravensbourne National Park we found **Red Deer** (a hind and large fawn) that gave a great view with the strong winds probably helping. Spotlighting was very quiet and very cold but we turned up **Common Brushtail Possum**, **Grey-headed Flying-fox** and **Brown Hare**.

16 August: Farewell to Toowoomba we explored the Bunya Mountains National Park and enjoyed close-up encounters with several tame **Red-necked Wallabies**. We continued onto Dalby, checked into the hotel and in the late afternoon headed west to Chinchilla and then north to the Barakula State Forest. We found our first **Swamp Wallaby** and **Eastern Grey Kangaroos**. As it darkened we commenced road spotlighting and after a while found several **Black-striped Wallabies**. A total of nine were seen mostly attracted to grassy roadside depressions with the best green pick (fresh grass growth). They were all seen along Auburn Road north of the Barakula Road turnoff and mostly north of the Dingo fence. We had great views-Dave's second target down. A walking spotlight found a **Greater Glider** and several **Little Red Flying-foxes** attracted to flowering Eucalypts.

17 August: Heading north we left Dalby and drove to Auburn River National Park hoping to see **Herbert's Rock Wallaby**. I managed to see one near the lookout in the late afternoon but it was shy and disappeared before Dave got onto it. We scoped and waited till dark but no further sightings. We went spotlighting and found (2) **Whiptail Wallabies**, (1) Red-necked Wallaby, (7) Greater Gliders, (1) **House Cat** and a road-killed Swamp Wallaby but no luck with the rock wallaby.

18 August: We returned to the park and walked down the gorge hoping to see the Herbert's Rock Wallaby in the morning warming in the sun. This time I had another flash view and again Dave dipped. After a thorough search we eventually gave up. This species

seems very skittish here although there were abundant signs of their presence. We had a lengthy drive to make it to Springsure.

It was another cold day with consistent soaking rain and temperatures ranging 9-13 degrees C. I had arranged permission to visit a private nature reserve on a property where Bridled Nailtail Wallabies had been successfully translocated. I had attempted to get permission to visit the Taunton Scientific Reserve near Dingo but was unsuccessful despite my best efforts. It was lucky I had been able to visit here in the early 1990's!

After meeting with the landholder we were given a map and keys and so headed out in the late afternoon to try our luck. We were lucky and had excellent views of two **Bridled Nailtail Wallabies** after about 7:30 pm. The first one was eating as much fresh green pick as it could chew rapidly. Another hopped in front of the vehicle. A very beautiful macropod. The cold conditions, dense Brigalow and tall grass made them by no means guaranteed so we were lucky. We also spotted (1) Black-striped Wallaby, (4) Eastern Grey Kangaroos and (1) **Echidna**.

19 August: Leaving the mining town of Blackwater behind I made a stop in the early morning at some sandstone escarpments 3 km W of Westwood on the right hand side if you are heading west. I tracked down the local land holder and he was fine for us to look for rock wallabies. We parked on the nearest dirt road, set up the telescope and were rewarded with no less than (10) Herbert's Rock Wallabies sunning themselves on different ledges. At least two females had large out of pouch young. A Wedge-tailed Eagle made a close pass but the Petrogales did not spook. Dave breathed a sigh of relief, I think I did too!

Happy now with being on track, we concentrated on birds and looked unsuccessfully for Yellow Chats in Marmor of the rare Capricorn subspecies. We then made the lengthy drive to Eungella arriving at Broken River on dusk. We enjoyed great views of (4) **Platypus** including watching a pair mating in the water.

20 August: Mammals were temporarily on the back foot as we searched for and enjoyed great views of the two birds David was keen to see: Eungella Honeyeater and Russet-tailed Thrush. We journeyed north to Proserpine and checked into our next hotel. In the afternoon we went to Peter Faust Dam, 25 km W of Proserpine. In the late afternoon there was no shortage of **Unadorned Rock Wallabies** on the dam wall. We counted more than (20). An Echidna walked through the scope view whilst we were enjoying the wallabies.

As it became dark we commenced spotlighting. There is a large rock quarry on the left with a large patch of humid vine thicket near the dam wall. It was here we enjoyed two really good views of **Proserpine Rock Wallaby** showing the long black white-tipped tail, chestnut rump, white cheek stripe and short greyish fur. We saw several more Unadorned Rock Wallabies in this area that emerged from cover in the darkness. We continued spotlighting and had a great night. We counted (10) Common Brushtails, (3) Greater Gliders including two pale morphs, had a stunning view of a **Squirrel Glider**

that was interestingly pinkish buff below, (10) **Agile Wallabies**, (3) **Black Flying-foxes**, (5) **European Rabbits** and found a roosting **Little Broad-nosed Bat** in a culvert.

21 August: It was north again this time to Townsville. During the day we visited the Billabong Sanctuary and looked at their captive mammals the standout being Northern Bettong. In the late afternoon we visited the Alligator Creek Camping Ground of Cape Bowling Green National Park. It was easy here to see at least (10) **Allied Rock Wallabies** whilst a bit further up on a public road called Mount Elliot Drive we found our first **Rufous Bettong** for the trip.

22 August: In the morning after eventually finding a Mangrove Gerygone for Dave at Cungulla we headed west along the Hervey's Range Road. We stopped to investigate numerous roadside culverts and today we had considerable success. In large walk-in style culverts under the lookout we found (6) **Northern Broad-nosed Bats**. In another numbered 39 we found (2) **Gould's Wattled Bats** of the northern subspecies, (2) Northern Broad-nosed Bats and an **Eastern Cave Bat**.

This evening we spent at Greenvale and went spotlighting along the Pandanus Road for 30 km. We spoke to different landholders we met on the road and they had no concerns. Here we found (4) **Red Kangaroos**, (10) **Euros**, (10) Eastern Grey Kangaroos, (1) either Rock wallaby or Swamp Wallaby with a white tail tip, (1) House Cat and (5) European Rabbits. We dipped completely on the hoped for Spectacled Hare-Wallaby and the poor grass conditions may have been a factor.

23 August: Returning south we took the Clarke River turnoff to Ingham and called in at Kilcloonie Station. We met the landholder and he gave us permission to visit Mount Claro. We hiked up the mountain and had great views of (5) **Sharman's Rock Wallabies** in the mid morning. After this we went exploring towards Paluma. Near Hidden Valley I found the nest of an Eastern Pebblemound Mouse. We hung around in the evening but had no luck with this. In a couple of giant Flooded Gums we found (5-6) **Eastern Horseshoe Bats** roosting in the hollowed out tree chamber. Spotlighting from Hidden Valley via Paluma to Ingham revealed **Red-legged Pademelon** (3), Common Brushtail (1), **White-tailed Rat** (1), **Long-nosed Bandicoot** (1) and **Northern Brown Bandicoot** (1). Lesser Sooty Owl was also a good sighting.

24 August: In the morning we visited Tyto Wetlands with (2) Little Kingfishers being quite a good sighting. We drove north to Cardwell and spent a bit of time casing out the sites for Mahogany Glider. It was to no avail and we dipped despite a big effort. It was fairly quiet spotlighting in general but we found (1) **Spectacled Flying-fox**, (6) Little Red Flying-fox, (2) Northern Brown Bandicoots and (1) Agile Wallaby. A Red Southern Boobook (*lurida*) was a highlight at the Five Mile Swimming Hole.

25 August: Leaving Cardwell we made a detour to Bramston Beach Caravan Park. We spoke to the managers and they gave us permission to visit the cave where we enjoyed great views of (100) plus orange and dusky morphs of **Dusky Leafnose Bats**. In drizzle and cool conditions we went to Yungaburra our home for the next two nights. In the late

afternoon we visited Lake Barrine National Park. We had great views of (3) **Musky Rat Kangaroos** including one collecting nesting material by throwing leaves backwards with the arms and securing with the tail. In the evening we linked up with Alan Gillanders and spent one hour spotlighting with him on a private property behind the Curtain Fig Tree National Park. The first mammal I placed my light on was a **Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo**, a 3 year old female named Joan no less. We also enjoyed amazing views of **Green Ringtail** (5) and Coppery Brushtail (5). With early success here we said goodbye to Alan and continued onto The Crater. In the rain, drizzle and fog we had great views of (2) **Herbert River Ringtails** and (1) **Lemuroid Ringtail**. On the return drive we observed a Northern Brown Bandicoot and a **House Mouse**. It had been an excellent day that would free us up to search for elusive dry woodland species the next day.

26 Aug: Following a tip off from Alan we visited the Peterson Creek and found (2) **Northern Long-eared Bats** roosting in the information shelter along the trail near The Pocket. We spotted another Platypus here as well. We visited Granite Gorge near Mareeba where it is impossible to miss the **Mareeba Rock Wallaby**. We continued onto Mareeba Wetlands and met the property managers who gave us permission to search for mammals there at night. They had regularly seen Northern Quolls and occasionally Black-footed Tree Rats and had recently seen Water Rats but unfortunately we had no luck with any of these. Spotlighting our way out we spotted Common Brushtail (1), Greater Glider (3), Rufous Bettong (2), Spectacled Flying-fox (2) plus Agile Wallaby and Eastern Grey Kangaroo.

27 Aug: Driving north to Julatten we stopped at Blue-faced Parrot-finch site where we had great views of (10) of these colourful and scarce seed-eaters. I checked another roadside culvert and found a colony of **Large-footed (Southern) Myotis**. Our microbat list was growing. We checked into Kingfisher Park where a Great-billed Heron was quite a surprise in the middle of a cane field. In the evening we went up the Mount Lewis Road spotlighting for 26 km. We had great views of (4) **Daintree River Ringtails** (all seen beyond the first major clearing), (1) Red-legged Pademelon, (4) Long-nosed Bandicoots and at the bottom of the mountain in agricultural areas (2) Northern Brown Bandicoots. This last species plus **Bush Rat** came into the feeders at Kingfisher Park.

28 Aug: We drove north again this time to Cooktown staying a Mungumby Lodge for two nights. Cool conditions continued to prevail with temperatures reaching only 24 degrees C with strong winds and occasional showers. In the late afternoon we went to the viewing platform of Black Mountain. We waited and waited and scoped and scoped and then it became dark. We spotlit back and forwards in the tumbled boulder habitat and finally at 9:30 pm cracked a **Godman's Rock Wallaby** that gave a brief but good view. Driving back to Mungumby we disturbed a **Ghost Bat** off a hunting perch looking somewhat like a tailless frogmouth. We searched unsuccessfully for Striped Possum but found a Northern Long-eared Bat roosting in the lodge plus several Agile Wallabies.

29 Aug: We had arranged to meet up with Lewis Roberts, the legendary bush naturalist along with his brother Charlie of Shipton's Flat. Lewis was going to take us on a hike in

some remote country west of Mount Poverty to try and find a Bennett's Tree Kangaroo. Joining us was Jeanette Covacevich, retired herpetologist from the Queensland Museum.

It was very successful and we found four **Bennett's Tree Kangaroo**; firstly a female with a large pouch young perched in an Acacia about 10 metres up. Then Jeanette spotted another presumed female in the crown of a Kauri Pine in almost the next tree. About 200 metres further Lewis spotted a large male- a large and muscular animal compared to the females. We were ecstatic and gave Lewis a reasonable fee for his efforts.

In the evening we went spotlighting again. Firstly we returned to Black Mountain where we had a great view of Godman's Rock Wallaby (female with large young) just beyond the viewing platform towards Cooktown. We then linked up with Lewis and Charlie who had a **Striped Possum** staked out when we arrived. This was a female with a pouch young. We observed **Fawn-footed Melomys** (2), Eastern Horseshoe Bat (2) in a culvert, Long-nosed Bandicoot (1) and Agile Wallaby (5). Lewis took us to checkout some flowering Kadaghi Eucalypts and here we found an **Eastern Blossom Bat** that landed in the paddock disoriented by the light.

30 Aug: Farewell to Cooktown and hello to Musgrave, this time staying at Lotusbird Lodge. In the afternoon we scouted out sandstone escarpments about 10 km W of Musgrave after Sue of Lotusbird had contacted the landholders at Artemis Station. We toiled up and down several ridges and scree slopes finding several **Antilopine Kangaroos** in the gullies. We found some signs of the **Cape York Rock Wallaby** and I inadvertently flushed one that I heard hopping downhill but did not see but fortunately it crossed past Dave who had a good but fast view. Despite a return visit the next morning I never saw this one but at least it is easier for me to get back here than Dave! We started spotlighting heading for the Marina Plains in Lakefield National Park. After seeing more than (40) Agile Wallabies we found (1) **Northern Nailtail Wallaby** that gave a superb view. We continued onto the Nifold Plain beyond Saltwater Creek where this time I had some luck getting a cracking view of the scarce **Tropical Short-tailed Mouse** that ran across the road and froze in the spotlight before dashing down a sand burrow. We also saw Echidna (2) together, Little Red Flying-fox, **Wild Pig** and a King Brown Snake.

31 Aug: It was north again to Iron Range and Portland Roads. The recent wet weather made the track going in pretty sticky at Tozer's Gap but we ploughed through in 4WD in second gear making it through to Portland Roads our home for the next three nights. Spotlighting tonight turned up **Spotted Cuscus** with two males giving good views; **Southern Brown Bandicoot** (1) 12.5 km W of Portland House in tussock grass-Stringybark tropical woodland, **Cape York Melomys** (1), Spectacled Flying-fox and we heard Queensland Tube-nosed Bat. Non-mammals included a beak snapping male Marbled Frogmouth and a Scrub Python about 2.1 metres long.

1 Sep: Spotlighting tonight revealed another Southern Brown Bandicoot, Spectacled Flying-fox, **Dingo** (1), Spotted Cuscus (4), Cape York Melomys (2) with the major highlight being a **Grey Cuscus** seen from the main road between the East and West Claudie River showing all the key features like black tail, prominent ears, black dorsal

stripe. Non mammal highlights included Spotted Python, Brown Tree Snake and the endemic tree frog *Litoria eucnemis*. We spent the day tracking down some new birds for Dave ranging from Yellow-legged Flycatcher to Tropical Scrubwren.

2 Sep: The previous day and today we checked out the old tin mine shafts but could only definitively identify Eastern Horseshoe Bats on both visits including some bright red morphs mixed in. We had a pretty thorough search and could find no Fawn or Diadem Leafnose or Large-eared Horseshoe Bats that are sometimes found. The distinct absence of Bare-backed Fruit-Bats was striking and we never had any luck with Rufous Spiny Bandicoot. We went spotlighting and give a final big rev. We found Grey Cuscus (1), Spotted Cuscus (2), Spectacled Flying-fox (3) and photographed a Southern Brown Bandicoot. This last isolated taxa maybe more closely related to Golden Bandicoot and remains a distributional enigma being several thousand kilometres north from the next population. Non mammal highlights were a Green Python and Giant Tree Gecko.

3 Sep: A long drive out covering about 700 km back to Kingfisher Park at Julatten. We caught up with White-streaked Honeyeater for Dave. We observed more mammals on this day than any other of the entire trip. It started off with Antilopine Kangaroo on the roadside 20 km S of Coen. Then in a roadside culvert at the end of the first sealed section between Coen and Musgrave we found a **Semon's Leafnose Bat** showing acutely pointed ears, two prominent nose leaf protuberances, and a pink bare chin. Heading south we picked up Wild Pig (2) feeding on a road-killed carcass between Lakefield and Mount Carbine followed by the ubiquitous Agile Wallaby. Reaching Kingfisher Park we picked up Long-nosed Bandicoot, Northern Brown Bandicoot and House Mouse at the feeders with a great view of both **Canfield Rat** and Bush Rat together side by side. Spotlighting around the park revealed a **Feather-tailed Glider** feeding on a flowering palm while a flowering Capote in the orchard had attracted a stunning Striped Possum, Spectacled Flying-fox and another Eastern Blossom Bat.

4 Sep: Our final day we checked out a reserve on Carr's Creek Road in Julatten and had a great view of a Red-legged Pademelon. Then we drove along the coast stopping to examine a sea cave in rocks below the Rex Lookout. Here we found our final mammal of the tour in the form of the rare **Coastal Sheathtail Bat**. We found two of these magnificent bats in a vertical rock cleft. For dinner Dave celebrated with a fine Mud Crab and our mammal-watching journey was complete.

TRIP LIST

Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*

Short-beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus*

Northern Brown Bandicoot *Isodon macrourus*

Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isodon obesulus*

Long-nosed Bandicoot *Perameles nasuta*

Grey Cuscus *Phalanger intercastellanus*
Spotted Cuscus *Spilocuscus maculatus*
Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*

Striped Possum *Dactylopsila trivirgata*
Squirrel Glider *Petaurus norfolcensis*

Lemuroid Ringtail Possum *Hemibelideus lemuroides*
Greater Glider *Petauroides volans*
Green Ringtail Possum *Pseudochirops archeri*
Daintree River Ringtail Possum *Pseudochirulus cinereus*
Herbert River Ringtail Possum *Pseudochirulus herbertensis*

Feathertail Glider *Acrobates pygmaeus*

Musky Rat Kangaroo *Hypsiprymnodon moschatus*

Rufous Bettong *Aepyprymnus rufescens*

Bennett's Tree Kangaroo *Dendrolagus bennettianus*
Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo *Dendrolagus lumholtzii*
Agile Wallaby *Macropus agilis*
Antilopine Kangaroo *Macropus antilopinus*
Black-striped Wallaby *Macropus dorsalis*
Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus*
Whiptail Wallaby *Macropus parryi*
Euro *Macropus robustus*
Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*
Red Kangaroo *Macropus rufus*
Bridled Nailtail Wallaby *Onychogalea fraenata*
Northern Nailtail Wallaby *Onychogalea unguifera*
Allied Rock Wallaby *Petrogale assimilis*
Cape York Rock Wallaby *Petrogale coenensis*
Godman's Rock Wallaby *Petrogale godmani*
Herbert's Rock Wallaby *Petrogale herberti*
Unadorned Rock Wallaby *Petrogale inornata*
Mareeba Rock Wallaby *Petrogale mareeba*
Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby *Petrogale penicillata*
Proserpine Rock Wallaby *Petrogale Persephone*
Sharman's Rock Wallaby *Petrogale sharmani*
Red-legged Pademelon *Thylogale stigmatica*
Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor*

Black Flying-fox *Pteropus alecto*
Spectacled Flying-fox *Pteropus conspicillatus*
Grey-headed Flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus*

Little Red Flying-fox *Pteropus scapulatus*
Eastern Blossom Bat *Syconycteris australis*

Ghost Bat *Macroderma gigas*

Eastern Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus megaphyllus*

Dusky Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros ater*
Semon's Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros semoni*

Coastal Sheathtail Bat *Taphozous australis*

Gould's Wattled Bat *Chalinolobus gouldii*
Large-footed (Southern) Myotis *Myotis adversus*
Northern Long-eared Bat *Nyctophilus bifax*
Little Broad-nosed Bat *Scotorepens grayii*
Northern Broad-nosed Bat *Scotorepens sanborni*
Eastern Cave Bat *Vespadelus troughtonii*

Tropical Short-tailed Mouse *Leggadina lakedownensis*
Cape York Melomys *Melomys capensis*
Fawn-footed Melomys *Melomys cervinipes*
* House Mouse *Mus musculus*
Bush Rat *Rattus fuscipes*
Canefield Rat *Rattus sordidus*
Giant White-tailed Rat *Uromys caudimaculatus*

Dingo *Canis lupus*

* House Cat *Felis catus*

* Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

* Pig *Sus scrofa*

* Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

* European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

