

update to Island Fox, Santa Cruz Island, California (Channel Islands National Park) and the Carrizo Plains kangaroo rats (Carrizo Plains National Monument)

As of late June 2012, here are updates:

### **Santa Cruz Island**

Just because there is some confusion, this preserve is NOT near or associated with the California hippie town of Santa Cruz (which is near San Francisco), but is an hour by boat offshore from Ventura Harbor, which is half an hour south of Santa Barbara and an hour and a half north of Los Angeles. There is decent but not great pelagic birding on the ride over, and sometimes (not always) large numbers of Common Dolphin (mixed species pods?). In summer this general area is very good for Blue Whale but you would need to go on a dedicated trip, either out of Ventura or on the Condor, out of Santa Barbara.

### **Island Fox**

The upper and lower loop campgrounds at Scorpion Ranch, eastern Santa Cruz Island, remain 100% reliable for Island Fox if you spend one night camping. The foxes continue to increase and are becoming somewhat tame. The rangers claim they will go for food bags quite shamelessly—it was implied they nearly want to snatch the sandwich from your hand. (This is not quite true.) Food lockers are supplied for camping, like the bear lockers in Yosemite and other national parks.

Their increase in visibility (and, probably, increasing absolute numbers) makes a daytime sighting possible, especially for visitors to California who can't (or don't want to) camp. As a guess, one would have a 25+% chance of seeing the fox just on a day visit. Best strategy would be to come out on the first boat of the day (avoiding weekends if possible), endure the mandatory orientation lecture once ashore, then hike quickly away from the dock, checking both campground loops thoroughly and then heading up Scorpion Canyon. (This is also good for seeing jays.) On the return, take the last boat of the day, and allow at least an hour again to check the campgrounds.

Island Packers in Ventura remains the concession for access.

### **Spotted Skunk**

I looked both in evening and early morning hours around the upper loop campground and up Scorpion Canyon but did not see any on a one-night visit. According to National Park staff, the population is healthy; it is just a matter of seeing a secretive wee beastie. The rangers I spoke to who live on the island had all seen them but said the odds on any given night were small.

### **Thompson's Big-eared Bat**

As of late June 2012 the colony in the adobe kitchen at Scorpion Harbor has suffered mortality from an unknown source (necropsies pending) and has abandoned both the building and a nearby cave that was hoped to be a refuge too. Or, if they WERE in the cave, I never saw any emerge in the hour after twilight.

## **Carrizo Plains National Monument**

### **Kit Fox**

Using a spotlight I saw three in one night, June 2012.

### **kangaroo rats**

Conditions remain the same as previous reports; an additional species for me was **California Pocket Mouse**. During my visit, the most productive place for kangaroo rats was the road to Selby Campground (posted off of the main north-south axis road, about midway in the main valley). As a separate note, on a Sunday night, both this site and the KLC Campground were empty. KLC Campground had feeding *myotis* "sp." Night birds in this area included Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Poorwill, and Lesser Nighthawk.

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