

## Batwatch Big Bend, May 12-19, 2012, with Fiona Reid and Loren Ammerman

**May 12:** Flights to San Angelo. On arrival, we transferred to Clarion Hotel and later Dr. Ammerman gave an introduction to her work in Big Bend and logistics of our trip. A planned trip to Foster Road Bridge did not happen as the group was too tired and some flights were delayed.



**May 13:** We set off about 9 a.m. for Big Bend, stopping in Fort Stockton for lunch and trip supplies. On the road shortly after Ft Stockton, we stopped to look at a **Black-tailed Prairie Dog** colony. Near Marathon we saw **Mule Deer** and earlier a lone **Pronghorn**. We arrived in the park at about 4 p.m.

We saw **Sierra del Carmen White-tailed Deer** on our way to Panther Junction, and **Rock**

**Squirrel** (black-headed race) in the Basin, where we checked in to Chisos Mountain Lodge, Rio Grande units. We were shown a small group of **California Myotis** in a crevice in the lodge roof.

Later we headed out to Glenn Springs where we set two harp traps and several mist nets. We saw Black Bear tracks in the creek-bed, these were very fresh as it had rained the previous night. Netting was slow but we eventually caught several **Pallid bats** and **Western Pipistrelles**, plus one **Cave Myotis** and one **Ghost-faced Bat** (right).



**May 14:** In the morning we went birding at Dug-out Wells. There was little free-standing water. We saw a good mix of birds but few

mammals, just a **Desert Cottontail** and **Black-tailed Jackrabbit**.

We had planned to take a long hike to a site known as Menagerie, up Tornillo Creek, but the weather turned bad and instead we went to Rio Grande. The wind was incredible, live branches were falling from the trees, but a lone Vermilion Flycatcher was



foraging contentedly! On our way back to the Basin, the weather improved so we checked another possible location at Croton Springs, but it was still too windy to net.

**May 15:** Most of the group headed uphill on the Pinnacles Peak trail in search of **Colima Warbler**, which we did eventually see, not far from Emory Peak. We also enjoyed Mexican Jays and sighted the large **Davis Mountain Cottontail**.



In the afternoon we went to Ernst Tinaja, a beautiful location. We set several nets but only caught bats close to and over the waterhole. It was a great place to lie back on a rock and watch free-tails flying overhead in the setting sun. We recorded **Pallids**, **Western Pipistrelles** and a **Western Small-footed Myotis**. Fiona saw a **Ringtail**, and we all saw Red-spotted Toads. On the way back to the basin we saw a number of **Black-tailed Jackrabbits** and **Desert Cottontails**. Two **Merriam's Kangaroo Rats** were seen by those in the first vehicle.



**May 16:** In the morning we returned to Rio Grande Village, in hopes of seeing Collared Peccaries (locally known as Javelina). We did see Roadrunners, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, MacGillivray's Warbler, Big Bend Sliders, and more, but no peccaries. We also stopped at Hot Springs, where we enjoyed the call and sighting of a Canyon Wren and a Flame Skimmer.

In the afternoon the intrepid contingent set off on the Desert Death March to Menagerie, a 1.5 hour hike along Tornillo Creek in blazing sun. We saw very little en route, although we found a crossing point marked with numerous coyote, peccary and deer tracks, plus some raccoon prints. The netting was very



disappointing at first, but picked up after 10:30 when an insect emergence took place, making it difficult to untangle bats with small moths and flies zooming in our headlamps. We added **Mexican Freetail**, **Big Brown** and **Hoary Bat** to our list, and we heard some of the larger freetails flying over and calling audibly. On our walk back we did not see any new mammals,

but in the parking lot we were serenaded by coyotes as we enjoyed a nice cold beer!

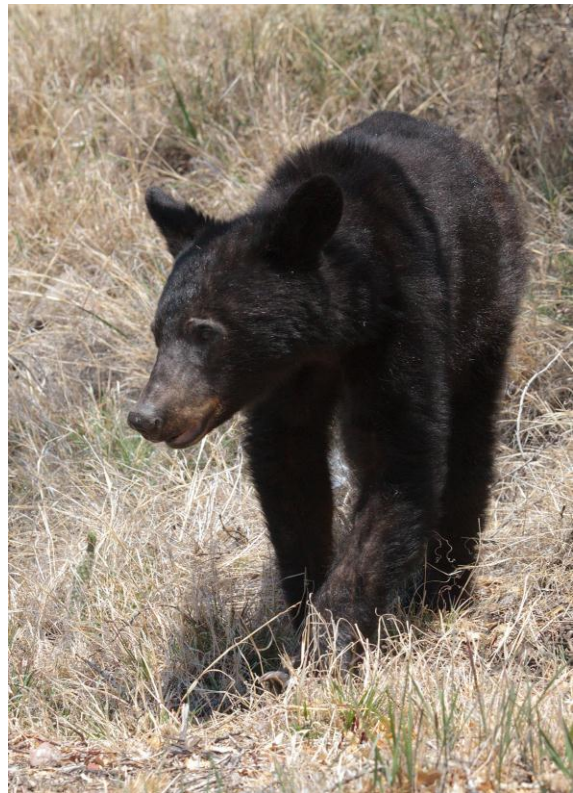
**May 17:** We went to Sam Nail ranch in the morning, a good spot for birds and lizards, then on to Cottonwood campground near Castolon. In the afternoon we went to Mariscal Mine where we set two harp traps and three mist nets at and near mine entrances. We caught a number of **Townsend's Big-eared Bats** (right), along with **Fringed** and **Cave Myotis**, and one Pallid. On our way back we had great views of a **Merriam's Kangaroo Rat** in the parking area, and on the dirt road we saw several **Chihuahuan Pocket Mice**.



**May 18:** In the morning we hiked to Cattail Falls, one of the prettiest locations we had seen. Here we saw two Black-necked Garter Snakes, but we failed to find the Canyon Tree Frog. Fiona spotted a **Pallid Bat** roosting under a low boulder, in a space about 6 inches from the ground (below). It was all alone in its small roost.



On our return to the lodge we had great views of a young



**Black Bear.**

After lunch we drove to Terlingua and on to Lajitas where we visited a desert museum. We had supper at the Starlight Theatre, then returned to the Cattail Falls trail. Part of the group stayed at a stream bed. On their way out they saw a **Swift Fox**. Melissa, Fiona and George went up to the Falls and set a couple of nets. We did not catch any bats, but on our way back we saw some curious invertebrates (Big Bend Gold Carapace Tarantula, left, and Giant Vinegaroon eating a millipede, right).



And near the road a lovely **Texas Long-nosed Snake**.



**May 19:** We drove back to San Angelo and some headed home, others stayed over and flew out the next day. The group is shown below, except George Smiley (intrepid photographer seen in stockinged feet in Cattail Falls), who took all the animal pictures (and this one) aside from the Vinegaroon, which was Melissa Donnelly's. People and landscapes by Fiona.

