

North West USA – April 2010

I flew into Spokane on 5/4 and headed north to Metalline Falls, where there is a Mountain Goat spot. I dipped on the goat but found a very cooperative Red-tailed Chipmunk.

In central Washington I found Washington Ground Squirrels at a known area south of Moses Lake. Going west on Rt. 262 from Rt. 17, as you get close to Sullivan Dam you see double signs for Public Fishing/Public Hunting. There is only one on the left and a local guy said he sees them at the first cattle guard on that road. The ones on the right go to the lake for boat put ins, only one is paved. Go past the paved one and turn right on the next road and stop. There is a red sign on the right and the burrow entrance is directly across from the sign in a sandy bank. The squirrels were going in and out of the burrow and across the road.

Once I got south of the Columbia River I started looking for Townsend's Ground Squirrels. I found an obliging group in the middle of nowhere and another group behind the Snoqualmie Winery in Prosser, at exit 82 off I-82. When you go into the winery there is a road at the end of the parking lot signed dead end. Go down that road, it bears right, and the squirrels were next to a broken culvert on the left. The whole thing is less than a thousand yards. Just down the street from the winery I found a family of Yellow-bellied Marmots across from 1913 Wine Country Rd.

So I got into Boise a day before Matt Miller and I were going to hook up but found the Piute and Idaho Ground Squirrels right where Jon reported in his post. I found probably the same American Badger as Jon did at last light.

Matt and I had breakfast the next morning and I got a few tips for Yellowstone. I'd like to add my thanks to Matt for the cool places he knows.

On east to the Silver Creek Preserve and easy Columbia Ground Squirrels and my life Moose. I stopped at Craters of the Moon and the ranger said try camp site 39 for Pikas, they are right around the amphitheater; but not while I was there.

Next up was Dillon, MT. I allocated two days to try for Pygmy Rabbit which I really want to see. Lots of Big Sage and lots of burrows but no rabbit. I did hear what was undoubtedly the alarm call, since I was parked right on top of the burrow. If anyone has a wav/mp3 file, or the like, I would love to hear it. Wyoming Ground Squirrels with a buff undertail were all over.

Red Rock Lakes NWR had some bad roads, Uinta Ground Squirrels with gray undertails, and not much else. Not much to recommend it.

It was my first trip to Yellowstone, the big mammals were cool and a little weird at the same time, IMO. A Gray Wolf had given birth across the valley from Slough Creek and

there were a dozen scopes on the den all day long. An NPS intern finally got me on her. At Hellroaring trail parking lot I found a very cooperative Pika and an uncooperative likely Uinta Chipmunk; I could easily sell myself on it but I let it slide. I went back the next morning for another try and got stonking looks at a Long-tailed Weasel that worked back and forth for 5 minutes, even coming into the parking lot for a while. I can see why the Chipmunks are skittish; no luck with the Uinta Chipmunk.

The closest place I could find for White-tailed Prairie Dogs was just east of Cody, Wy. Going east on 14, just past 120, I made the first right I came to and found them in the field on the right. You could probably find a hundred of them if you wanted to.

I hadn't planned anything past this point so decided to go up to Glacier NP. I found Mountain Goats near the salt lick but the road to Logan Pass was closed so no Hoary Marmots. I then went east to try for Swift Fox. I dipped on it but found a good place. North of Chinook, MT along Xeno and Middle Rds is where the animal was live trapped for reintroduction efforts elsewhere. I met a guy who drives the area for the gas compression plant on Xeno Rd who said they would den or day roost in culverts at the plant, and he would see them lounging on the ground in the afternoon, running down the road in front of his truck, etc. May is apparently not a good time of year. Richardson's Ground Squirrels were all over the place and I got a nice day time look at White-tailed Jackrabbit.

There is large colony of Columbian Ground Squirrels at the rest stop on west bound I-90 a few miles before the Idaho border.

It was an outstanding trip, 4400 miles through some beautiful country and 20 life mammals. I am way glad I did it.

I put a bunch of middling photos at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51004872@N03/>

I'm too lazy to figure out how to organize them better.

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Notes:

The Washington Ground Squirrel survey is here (the map on page 20 is where I went):

http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/research/papers/ground_squirrel/ground_squirrel04.pdf

The Pygmy Rabbit survey in Montana is here (I tried the Sweetwater Creek area):

http://mtnhp.org/reports/07_2005_Pygmy_Rabbit.pdf

The map of White-tailed Prairie Dogs in WY is here, see page 24:

<http://bsi.montana.edu/prairiemap/files/Gunnisonprairiedogreport.pdf>

Montana has an online field guide which has some great info on some species:

<http://fieldguide.mt.gov/>

This site has range maps of species in Washington and California. It is an attempt to improve on the range maps in field guides, which isn't too hard:

<http://depts.washington.edu/natmap/maps/>

I have

Kays and Wilson, *The Mammals of North America*, 2d edition. It has up to date taxonomy and ranges, and good information, but the artwork is maybe not so great.

Bowers, Bowers, and Kaufmann, *The Mammals of North America*.