

I travelled to Jackson Wyoming earlier this month to offer a workshop for community college instructors who use camera traps as instructional tools. My wife and daughter accompanied me for the first week and set a personal goal of seeing as many species of mammals as we could. This was not our first trip to



the GYE and we visited some old favorites and found some new locations. I won't detail every single sighting but go over some of the highlights. I hope this report proves useful as well as entertaining. In all, we/I identified 29 species of mammals over a two week period (full list on last page).

We stayed for two nights at the Teton Science School (TSS) in Jackson and set six cameras the first day. On day two, we ventured into Grand Teton National Park. We easily ticked **elk, moose, bison,**



mule deer and **pronghorn** (one note-worthy large male) as well as **least** and **yellow pine chipmunks, yellow-bellied marmot** and **red squirrel**. Our first lucky find was a **red fox** at dusk in the parking lot of Dornan's restaurant near Moose Junction. The bison were in rut with males tending females.

On Day three we left the TSS before sunrise to head North to Yellowstone National Park. A **Western Jumping Mouse** darted out in front of our car as we exited the campus. In what was to become a familiar theme, we drove up to a

"bear jam" just after a grizzly and two cubs had made an appearance on the Rockefeller Parkway. Our first stop was Fishing Bridge. I remember the spot well from a visit there 17 years ago when a man become verbally hostile when I disagreed with his identification of the semi-aquatic mammals that were a mere few meters in front of us. He thought they were beaver; I knew they were muskrats. It is a funny story that I tell to my First Year students every semester. Turns out it is still a reliable location for day time **Muskrat** sightings.



I visited the Yellowstone Forum website before the trip and saw that a grizzly sow and cubs were often seen on the road East from Fishing Bridge. We ventured that way but did not see the bears. Other new species that day included **big brown bat**, **Uinta ground squirrel**, **coyote** and **golden-mantled ground squirrel**. We slept in West Yellowstone that night and headed north towards Gardiner for the next night. We stopped just south of Mammoth at the hoodoos for **pika**. Throughout all of this, our daughter was suffering from an infection in her lower jaw. She had all four wisdom teeth removed only a few days before the trip and a lengthy stop at the pharmacist in Gardiner set her on a better path. 😊

The itinerary for the next day included an early start so we could climb Mount Washburn, a family favorite. A **mountain cottontail** in the parking lot of the motel proved to be our second and last Lagomorph of the trip. We arrived at the trail head on Chittenden Road a little later than we had hoped but were still the first to arrive. The weather forecast was dismal and that is probably why no one else was there. We had a pleasant but cold and rainy hike up the roadway (the Dunraven Pass trail is prettier, but longer) to the summit. The fierce wind that morning put the **bighorn sheep** on the lee side of a rock outcrop. At the summit, we hung our raingear and ate our breakfast. The weather cleared and we began the hike down. At this point, we had yet to meet up with another hiker. We did however, meet up with golden-mantled ground squirrels, pika, yellow-bellied marmots and a red fox that was willing to share the trail with us.



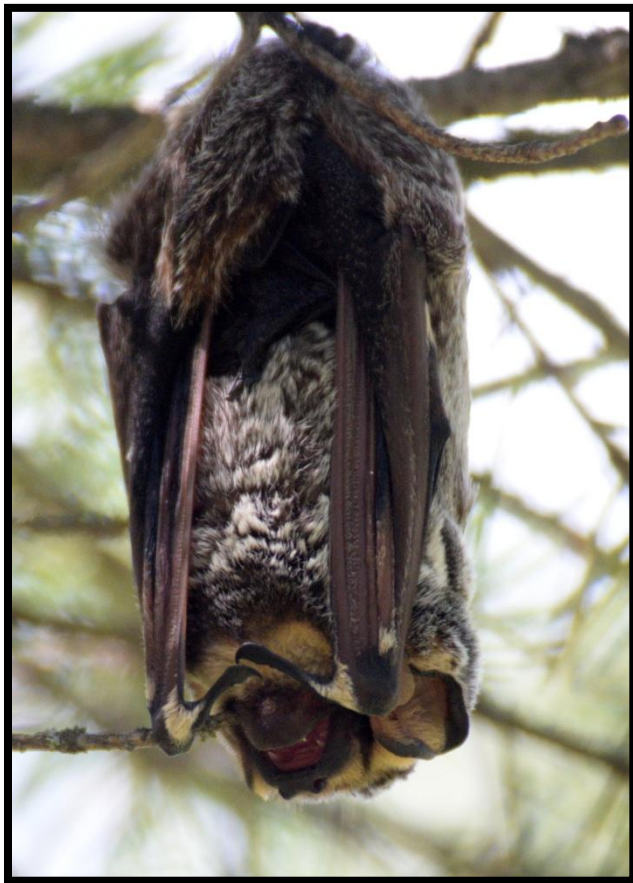
We spent the rest of the day missing bears. “You should have been here ten minutes ago!” was the theme. We did have an unusual sighting as a squatty muddy mammal walked down the shoulder of the road towards us. For one glorious moment as the sun was in my eyes and the dark mustelid refused to show its distinctive facial markings, I thought I was seeing my lifer wolverine. Alas, it was a **badger**.



We spent the evening hours at a pull off in Hayden Valley. Our targets were wolf and grizzly bear. We would see neither. A nice surprise was an **ermine (short-tailed weasel)** that I spotted while finding a “men’s room”. I got fairly good looks at the critter and was confident in my identification. When I reported my finding to the wolf-watchers up at the parking area, one commented “It was probably a long-tailed weasel, they are more common.” I smiled. I teach my students to never ID an animal that way.

The next day was spent largely exploring thermal features and we added no new mammals to the list. But we did add many miles to the odometer as we had to drive all the way back to Jackson so Laura and Danika could catch the first flight out on their way back to New York. We said our good byes at 530 am and I headed to a nearby trail to search for moose. What I found instead was a **black bear**. The dim light made photographing it difficult but it was so still, I could hear it chewing. I also added **montane vole** and watched it for a good bit as it harvested and ate grass.

The following day was spent making last minute arrangements for the workshop, shuttling participants from the airport and scouting locations with the other instructors. Although we were seeing plenty of wildlife (including a bull moose that decided to camp out right in front of our dorm), no new mammal species were added to my list until one of the participants stumbled on this roosting **hoary bat**.



What a lucky find! Everyone got to see this up close and personal.

We added beaver to the list that evening at Gros Venture in GTNP where we went for moose. The beaver were out early in full daylight and I was able to get some interesting behavioral photos of an adult female and last year's kit (Another great location for this species is Schwabacher Road and I spent my last evening there with some excellent photographic opportunities).



The last day of the workshop added four more mammals. A very long tailed **long-tailed weasel** ran in front of the van as we were driving past the airport and in the evening, the whole group got to see both **grizzly bear** and **gray wolf** in Hayden Valley. But my favorite sighting of the day was a **Northern pocket gopher** in the early afternoon near Old Faithful. This was a lifer for me and everyone else in the workshop for that matter (although I was much more impressed than anyone else).



That left one day to shuttle everyone back to the airport and pack up and one day to myself. I chose to hike up Paintbrush Canyon in GTNP in hopes of photographing pika, an animal I won't see any time soon. I was not disappointed.



I was pleased with the overall list (see final page) but still missed some relatively easy species such as snowshoe hare. I had hoped for marten or river otter but cannot complain about the mustelids I did see. I saw some interesting behavior as well including a bull elk bugling on August 14th and red squirrels harvesting cones.

Anyone interested in more (mostly mammal) photos can see them at

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.877518635648867.1073741892.100001722162214&type=1&l=c21e8b696c>

Anyone interested in our camera trap results should go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.880653758668688.1073741893.100001722162214&type=1&l=be5aaec6a4>



CODES EXPLAINED:

“How often was this species seen?”

SS = single sighting of this species; MS = Two or more sightings of this species. May be same individual(s) but at different times.

“How many individuals did you see?”

SI = single individual. This could be single individuals seen multiple times; MI = multiple individuals. This includes mother with young.

“What was your best photographic opportunity?” (Assumes competent amateur status with telephoto lens)

0 = essentially no realistic way to photograph (too far; too quick)

1 = voucher shot showing at least some identifying characteristics was possible

2 = good photo opportunity

3 = exceptional photo opportunity (very close, long encounter and/or interesting behavior)

Species list (in order of appearance):

1. Bison (MS/MI/3)
2. Moose (MS/MI/3)
3. Elk (MS/MI/3)
4. Red Squirrel (MS/SI/3)
5. Yellow-pine Chipmunk (MS/MI/3)
6. Mule Deer (MS/MI/3)
7. Pronghorn (MS/MI/2)
8. Least Chipmunk (MS/SI/2)
9. Big Brown Bat (SS/MI/1)
10. Yellow-bellied Marmot (MS/MI/3)
11. Uinta Ground Squirrel (MS/MI/2)
12. Western Jumping Mouse (MS/SI/0)
13. Red Fox (MS/SI/3)
14. Muskrat (SS/SI/3)
15. Coyote (SS/SI/1)

16. Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel (MS/SI/2)

17. Pika (MS/SI/3)

18. Mountain Cottontail (SS/SI/1)

19. Bighorn Sheep (MS/MI/1)

20. Badger (SS/SI/2)

21. Ermine (SS/SI/0)

22. Black Bear (SS/SI/1)

23. Montane Vole (SS/SI/1)

24. Hoary Bat (SS/SI/3)

25. Beaver (MS/MI/3)

26. Long-tailed Weasel (SS/SI/0)

27. Northern Pocket Gopher (SS/SI/3)

28. Grizzly Bear (SS/SI/1)

29. Gray Wolf (SS/SI/1)

Shrew sp. Spotted crossing road. No positive identification.

