

Trip Report (Mammals) - Arizona and New Mexico - 16 March to 9 April 2013

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My girlfriend and I recently did a 24-day, 4000-mile, 29-mammal drive around Arizona and New Mexico, starting from Orange County, LA. Our route took us east along southern Arizona and into New Mexico, up to Santa Fe, then back west through Flagstaff and central Arizona to Orange County, with a mix of wildlife stops and sight-seeing; the route summarised at the end of this report. We saw 29 species with nothing out of the ordinary, but 18 new ones for me and I dipped on Mexican Fox Squirrel, Black-footed Ferret and White-sided Jackrabbit, perhaps still too cold, as evidenced by the lack of rattlesnake sightings; and it was obviously too early in the season for the bats.

A - Trip List

1	Abert's Squirrel	<i>Sciurus aberti</i>
2	Arizona Gray Squirrel	<i>Sciurus arizonensis</i>
3	Harris's Antelope Squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus harrisii</i>
4	Texas Antelope Squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus interpres</i>
5	White-tailed Antelope Squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>
6	Gunnison's Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>
7	Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>
8	Rock Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus variegatus</i>
9	Gray-collared Chipmunk	<i>Tamias cinereicollis</i>
10	Cliff Chipmunk	<i>Tamias dorsalis</i>
11	Least Chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>
12	Merriam's Kangaroo Rat	<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>
13	Common Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
14	Yellow-nosed Cotton Rat	<i>Sigmodon ochrognathus</i>
15	Antelope Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus alleni</i>
16	Black-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>
17	Desert Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>
18	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
19	Gray Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>
20	Kit Fox	<i>Vulpes macrotis</i>
21	Hooded Skunk	<i>Mephitis macroura</i>
22	Striped Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
23	White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>
24	Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>
25	Collared Peccary	<i>Pecari tajacu</i>
26	Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>
27	White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>
28	Elk	<i>Cervus canadensis</i>
29	Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>

B - Records by Location (in order visited)

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (17-18 March)

- Gray Fox - at Alamo Canyon.
- Merriam's Kangaroo Rat – whilst spotlighting at Twin Peaks campsite.
- Harris's Antelope Squirrel - at the parking area of Estes trail.
- Desert Cottontail

Madera Canyon (18-19 March)

- White-tailed Deer - along the road.
- Arizona Gray Squirrels - common at Santa Rita Lodge feeders.
- Rock Squirrel - regular at the Santa Rita Lodge feeding station.
- Gray Fox – seen whilst spotlighting near the Amphitheatre.
- Raccoon - in a tree near the feeders, 10pm.

Continental

- Antelope Jackrabbit – on the road from Continental to Madera Canyon; one was seen where the power lines crossed the road (about 2 miles from the school) and one crossing the road about a mile from the school.
- Black-tailed Jackrabbit – Madera Canyon Road.

Cave Creek Canyon (19-24 March)

- Harris's Antelope Squirrel - at the Quailway Cottage feeders by the gate.
- Mexican Fox Squirrel – still can't believe I did not see it in 4 days in the canyon.
- Desert Cottontail – roadside.
- Striped Skunk – at Idlewild campground (9pm), South Fork road, Cave Creek ranch.
- Hooded Skunk – one on South Fork Rd. Reed (owner of Cave Creek Ranch) says that Hooded Skunks are the most common skunk at Cave Creek Ranch.
- Gray Fox – at 8 pm when spotlighting outside the office at Cave Creek Ranch.
- Coati - at the feeding station (23 March), midday to evening, also the next morning; Reed noted he had not been there for prior 2 weeks.
- Collared Peccary (Javelina) – at Quailway Cottage feeding stations (24 and 25 March); none came through Cave Creek Ranch in our one day there but they had been seen the previous night.
- White-tailed Deer – best views were at Cave Creek Ranch feeding area.
- Yellow-nosed Cotton Rat – at Southwestern Research Station – seen at dusk in the feeders area, amongst the garden rocks and grass alongside the viewing platform.
- Striped Plateau Lizard (restricted range in the US) – stream at Herb Martyr picnic area.

Rodeo

The Chiricahua Desert Museum was worth a visit for the rattlesnake collection.

South of Animas

- White-sided Jackrabbit – we did not see it at the recommended area 34 - 40 miles south of Animas on road 338 (about 5 miles from the Mexico border). Saw no other rabbits in that area. Border Patrol pulled us over on the way back, as expected.
- Kit Fox – one seen about 35 miles south of Animas.

Chiricahua National Monument (25-26 March)

- Coati – a group of 12 along the road near the Natural Bridge trail.
- Cliff Chipmunk – poor views at Massai viewpoint.

- Mexican Fox Squirrel - a ranger said that the woods 5 miles down Pinery Road was a good site, as well as near the visitor centre – but no luck.

Gila Lower Box Canyon (27-28 March)

Directions: North of Lordsburg drive 14.5 miles on road 464, turn west onto gravel road Fuller Rd (CR-A024). After 3.5 miles we turned right; went 5 miles to the signpost “New Mexico Birding Trail 13” then continued 4 miles to the canyon and camp. Brief views of a skunk at dusk then poor views of woodrat and kangaroo rats when spotlighting. A lot of small mammal tracks and on a warmer night I might have been more enthusiastic.

Dripping Springs Natural Area (28 March midday)

- Least Chipmunk – good views at the springs 1 mile walk from the visitor’s centre.

White Sands National Monument (28-29 March)

We arrived at 5.30 pm to see the dunes. I suggest having enough time for a couple hours on the Big Dune nature trail, then sunset at the end of the Dunes Drive and you could spotlight along the Interdune Boardwalk (for small mammals) before driving out.

Valley of Fire NRA (29-30 March)

- Texas Antelope Squirrel - 2 pairs at 5 pm on the nature trail over the lava flow.
- Unidentified wood-rat - walking over the lava flow at about 3 pm; only managed a head photo.
- Gray-footed Chipmunk is reported here but I did not see it; and easier elsewhere.

The nature trail is easy to spotlight but surprisingly I saw nothing of interest.

Nogal Canyon (31 March)

A gravel road goes up through pine forests to around 10,000 ft. A scenic drive but no Gray-footed Chipmunk. Did see Greater Short-horned Lizard.

Santa Fe (31 March)

There are Gunnison’s Prairie Dogs in various places (e.g. Jackalope 2820 Cerrillos Road) but I was unaware of that when visiting.

Bandelier National Monument (northwest of Santa Fe; 1 April)

- Abert’s Squirrels – a group of 4 in the car park.
- Mule Deer – along the nature trail past the C11-C15 aged cliff dwellings.

El Malpais National Monument (2 April)

- Cliff Chipmunk – at Zuni-Alcoma trailhead about 3.5 mile before El Malpais NM info centre.

We walked to the Bat Cave from El Calderon trailhead – it could be worth visiting in the right season.

At 25 miles south of Gallup we passed a prairie dog colony (Gunnison’s?).

Petrified Forest National Park (3 April)

- Gunnison's Prairie Dogs – one colony was at the turn to Newspaper Point; another immediately north of the road junction to Blue Mesa. Great scenery.

Montezuma Well (4 April)

- Common Muskrat – in the lake.
- Sonoran Mud Turtle.

Montezuma Castle (5 April)

- Cliff Chipmunk.

Flagstaff Arboretum area (6 April)

- Gray-collared Chipmunk - Flagstaff Arboretum is closed for winter so we searched the surrounding area. I saw the chipmunk on road NF-390A (which joins Woody Mountain Road about 0.9 miles east of Flagstaff Arboretum). A few chipmunks were seen in the rocky area between 100 and 300 m down this road as well as about 0.7 miles down the road at the first road intersection.
- Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel - road NF-390A.

Sunset Crater National Monument (7 April)

- Pronghorn – 12 to 14 in the grassy area about 300m into the park
- Abert's Squirrel – three at the visitors' centre whilst waiting for it to open.

Wupatki National Monument (7 April)

- Pronghorn – 2 at about 3 km before Citadel Pueblo.
- Gopher Snake at Wupatki Pueblo.

Arizona trailhead about 2 miles west of Walnut Canyon NM (7 April)

- Gray-collared Chipmunk – one pair in the parking area.

Arizona Snowbowl (8 April)

- Elk - 5 miles north of Flagstaff on road 180.
- Gray-collared Chipmunk and Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel - 1.5 miles up the road to Snowbowl.
- Abert's Squirrel - about 300 m up the road to Snowbowl.

Kendrick Park - about 20 miles NW of Flagstaff (8 April)

It started snowing whilst I walked the 1.5 mile trail. Trail notices said that Long-tailed Weasel, Badger and Porcupine were resident. It could also be a good spotlighting trail in warmer weather.

- Gray-collared Chipmunk – one pair in the car park.
- Abert's Squirrel – near the car park.

Seligman (8-9 April)

- Black-footed Ferret – NOT seen during our 11 pm to 1 am spotlighting (after alerting the ferret researchers by email at azferret@azgfd.gov). We concentrated on the area between the 126 - 128 mile markers 10 miles west of Seligman; all we saw were a few cottontail. The cold front may have kept them in.
- Gunnison's Prairie Dog – large colony 10 miles west of Seligman.
- Pronghorn – a herd of 16 seen a mile west of town.

Oatman (9 April)

Last mammal of the trip was Feral Donkey, descendants from those used in the old mining days and which have free range in this historic gold-mining town on Route 66.

C – Itinerary

March

- 16:** Orange (CA) via Salton Sea and Yuma to Ajo (AZ).
- 17:** Ajo to Organ Pipe Cactus NM. Camped.
- 18:** Organ Pipe Cactus NM to Tombstone and Madera Canyon. Santa Rita Lodge.
- 20:** Madera Canyon to Chiricahua Mountains NM, camped in Pine Canyon.
- 21:** Chiricahua Mountains to Portal in Cave Creek Canyon. 2 nights at Portal Peak Lodge then 1 night each at Cave Creek Ranch and Quailway Cottage.
- 24:** Rodeo and Animas.
- 25:** Cave Creek Canyon via Pinery Road to Chiricahua NM. Camped on Pinery Road.
- 26:** Chiricahua NM to Wilcox and Muleshoe Ranch (dusk visit),
- 27:** Wilcox (AZ) to Gila Lower Box Canyon (NM) - camped.
- 28:** Gila Lower Box to Dripping Springs, White Sands NM and Alamogordo.
- 29:** Alamogordo to White Sands NM and Valley of Fire NRA - camped.
- 30:** Valley of Fire NRA to Nogal Canyon, Sevilleta NWR and Socorro.
- 31:** Socorro via Albuquerque to Santa Fe.

April

- 1:** Santa Fe via Bandelier NM, Valles Caldera and Walatowa to Grants.
- 2:** Grants to El Malpais NPS, El Morro NM and Gallup.
- 3:** Gallup (AZ) to Petrified Forest NP, Holbrook and Mogollon Rim (camped).
- T4:** Mogollon Rim via Payson to Camp Verde.
- 5:** Camp Verde via Jerome to Sedona.
- 6:** Sedona to Flagstaff.
- 7:** Sunset Crater NM and Wupatki NM.
- 8:** Flagstaff – Kendrick Park - Seligman
- 9:** Seligman via Kingman and Oatman (AZ) to Orange (CA)