

ARIZONA MAMMAL TOUR

- *The Mustelid That Came Back From The Dead*

October 2011



Route 66 in the Aubrey valley, Northern Arizona: Home of Black-footed Ferrets.

Steve Morgan

ARIZONA MAMMAL TOUR – THE MUSTELID THAT CAME BACK THE DEAD

1 Introduction

The purpose of this trip was to see some of the rarer and more elusive mammals of Arizona with a particular focus on Black-footed Ferret, Ringtail and American Badger. I also hoped to see Pronghorn, Coyote, Black Bear, White-nosed Coati, Abert's Squirrel and Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat. A long supporting cast of other Chipmunks, Squirrels and Rodents was on the agenda too. Birds were not the main objective but in the Grand Canyon I hoped to see Californian Condor and a Grand Canyon Rattlesnake would also be more than welcome.

The absolute "must-see" was of course the Ferret. Reduced at its nadir to a population of just 18 animals, (and at one time actually thought to be extinct), the Ferret has now successfully been re-introduced to a number of selected sites, including the Aubrey Valley in Northern Arizona. In the darkest days, the 18 survivors were captured and put into a captive breeding programme in a last desperate last bid to save the species from oblivion. I am told that only seven of these were breeding females and so every Ferret alive today is a descendant of one of those seven progenitors. The programme has been very successful and some 200 Ferrets now live wild in the Aubrey Valley. (And I am told that there are a few hundred more at other re-introduction sites). Being desperate to see a Ferret, I contacted Jennifer Cordova at the Arizona Wildlife and Fisheries Department to seek advice. Imagine my delight at subsequently being invited to join them on a Ferret Release Night! This would be a rare opportunity to actually see Ferrets being released into the wild and to get close-up views and photographs.

For Ringtail, I had arranged to go on a three day trek to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with Wildland Trekking. My research had indicated that the campsites at Indian Garden and Bright Angel Creek were frequently raided by Ringtails and these animals were considered a "nuisance species" by campers. Some nuisance! As back-up I also booked three days at Cave Creek Ranch in South-eastern Arizona, where I had reports of Ringtails raiding the bird tables and where the proprietor (Reed Peters) had given me permission to put out bait.

I planned also to visit the Arboretum at Flagstaff for the spectacular Abert's Squirrel, Montezuma's Castle for Arizona Grey Squirrel and Casa Grande Ruins for Round-tailed Ground Squirrel. Finally, I kept a day or two in hand to take advantage of whatever opportunities arose in the field and/or to return to the Aubrey Valley if the first two nights didn't produce all its likely targets. Conversely, if I cleaned out the Valley quickly, I planned to add in the Botanical Gardens in Phoenix for Harris' Antelope Ground Squirrel and Mexican Free-tailed Bat.

2 Summary of the Results

Things went more or less according to plan. I got Black-footed Ferret independently on the first night and, of course, in spectacular style on the second with the Arizona Game and Fisheries people. The Ringtails were more than accommodating at Bright Angel and I rounded up Pronghorn and Abert's Squirrel at Flagstaff. I flushed out most of the other expected Squirrels and Chipmunks and fluked an

Ord's Kangaroo Rat in the Aubrey Valley. And, at Cave Creek, I got very nice views of White-nosed Coati and Black Bear.

The only major disappointment was dipping on American Badger (despite considerable effort to find one). I was a little surprised not to get a Coyote (I seem to be cursed never to see one) and a bit disgruntled not to turn up a Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat at Portal. But, overall, the trip did what it said on the tin and I recorded a total of 27 species.

3 Daily Record

Day 1: October 11th

Arduous long haul flight from London Gatwick to Phoenix via Charlotte followed by three hour drive north to Seligman via Flagstaff. Checked into the Deluxe Motor Inn at 23.00 totally exhausted.

Day 2: October 12th

A late breakfast at the Roadkill Cafe and then a morning recce of the nearby Aubrey Valley along Route 66. Warm and sunny after a rather cool start. Stopped at milepost 132 to scan and within four seconds (!) had recorded the first mammal: Gunnison's Prairie Dog. Further scanning revealed plenty more and the species was abundant at every subsequent stop. Ringtail Hen Harrier quartering the grasslands at 132. Later, at 127, recorded a distant male Mule Deer. Red-tailed Hawks common everywhere.

Returned to the Aubrey Valley late afternoon. Male Hen Harrier quartering grasslands at 132. Strangely, no Prairie Dogs visible anywhere. Presumably they emerge in the mornings to warm up in the sun and then return to their burrows as it gets hot in the afternoon. Found several Desert Cottontails at dusk at 127.

A third visit to the Valley later that evening saw the spotlighting get under way in earnest. Very quiet indeed until after 23.00 when the traffic finally disappeared. Then got very bright yellow eyeshine at about 60-70 metres at 129. Size of the animal suggested either Coyote or Grey Fox (probably the latter) but unable to get on it well enough for a positive ID. Later, got prolonged views of bright green eyeshine at 127. The two green eyes, close together and bobbing up and down indicated Black-footed Ferret. The animal, obviously smallish in size and moving quickly and sinuously over the ground, stopped periodically to stare at the spotlight. Unable to get much of a view but the ID was clear. (Study of Ferret eyeshine and movement the following evening confirmed this ID). Much later, got very bright yellowish-green eyeshine at 129. This time the eyes were somewhat farther apart but the animal was very low to the ground. Probably American Badger but again unable to get a good enough view to confirm the ID. Climbed under fence to try to get closer but the animal promptly disappeared down a hole, reinforcing the idea that it was a badger. Gave up the chase at 02.00 at which time the air temperature had fallen sharply.

Day 3: October 13th

Very late breakfast in Seligman at Lilo's Cafe. Great-tailed Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds common along Main Street in town. Then, a second daytime recce of the Aubrey Valley. Very quiet

with only a few Prairie Dogs showing. Air temperature much cooler than previous day and this might have been a factor. Pleasantly surprised to find a Ferruginous Hawk circling overhead at 132.

Rested in the afternoon in preparation for the much-anticipated evening event with the Arizona Game and Fishery people. Really looking forward to the opportunity to see Ferrets at close quarters and to get some photographs!

Met with Jennifer Cordova and her colleagues at the Seligman Field House in Picacho Street at around 18.30. A sizeable group had assembled including people from Arizona University and the Government. I think I was the only freeloader! The plan was to collect the 21 Ferrets to be released from the airport (due at about 19.00) and then to break up into three teams to release them at various pre-designated sites in the Aubrey Valley.

Much excitement at the airport as the precious cargo was duly received. The 21 carrying boxes, each containing a Ferret, were assembled and then divided up into three lots corresponding to the three release teams. I found myself with a Game and Fisheries Ranger named John and a Government chap who wanted to photograph the releases. With our Ferrets safely loaded in the back of our pick-up truck, we set off for our pre-ordained site in the Valley.

For the first two releases we found ourselves in cahoots with Jennifer's team. The intended release technique was to find a suitable Prairie Dog hole at or near the specified GPS location and to release the Ferret close by so that the animal would immediately have somewhere safe to ensconce itself in its first night of freedom. Each animal was also to be given an item of food to tide it over while it acclimatised to life in the wild. In theory the grateful animal would walk gleefully out of the carrying box, run into its hole and accept its last free meal. In practice, this never happened! The first release set the tone for the evening. Having found a nice hole, Heather (Jennifer's assistant), opened the cage door. The Ferret peered out nervously, gave a shuddering alarm rattle and disappeared back into the safety of the box. Moments passed and there was no sign of the Ferret wanting to leave. Eventually, Heather resorted to upending the box, at which point the very reluctant Ferret had freedom thrust upon it. However, far from settling into its intended new home, it then ran off in a completely different direction. We all followed it and for the next ten minutes the Ferret and the two release teams ran round in circles in the dark. At one point the Ferret, now a rattling, hissing ball of fury, ran straight at me and gave my right boot a nip. Eventually it found a hole to its liking and went underground. Heather dropped a piece of meat into it and a few seconds later the Ferret re-emerged, grabbed its free meal and disappeared. Job done! Only another six for John and I to do; obviously this was going to be a long evening!

After the first two releases, we parted from Jennifer's team and headed off to our respective release areas. Each release was as dramatic as the first, the ungrateful Ferrets resisting our attempts to free them with fierce rattles and snarls. At close quarters their aggression, speed of reaction and strength were obvious – and their teeth looked like little carving knives. John was extremely wary about where he put his hands; it would have been very easy to lose a finger or two. But, eventually, all of our seven animals were safely released, each one finding a hole to occupy for the night. It was quite sobering to think that these animals, who had up to today had a very easy life in the captive breeding facility in Colorado, were now wild animals whose survival depended totally on their own skills as hunters and their ability to evade predation. I wondered how they would fare and how many would survive.

As we moved from release site to release site I had hoped we might see other nocturnal animals and, indeed, we did find a Burrowing Owl, a Striped Skunk and a Black-tailed Jackrabbit. And, while we were releasing one of the Ferrets, we spotted a Kangaroo Rat. It was clearly too small to be Banner-tailed (and it lacked the bushy white tail) and John confirmed it to be Ord's. (Merriam's doesn't occur in the Aubrey Valley according to John). But, alas, no Badger. By 22.00 we were finished and I thanked John and Jennifer for a fantastic evening. What a privilege to be able to witness at first hand the re-introduction of this fabulous creature!



Black-footed Ferret, Aubrey Valley, Arizona.

Day 4: October 14th

It was time to leave Seligman, at least for the moment, and to move on to the Grand Canyon. Arriving at the South Rim in the early afternoon I parked at the Yavapai Lodge and took the shuttle to the visitor Centre – where Mather Point looks out over the canyon. Here, one immediately loses all sense of scale and perspective. The North Rim, opposite, looks quite close but is in fact ten miles away. This enormous gash in the Earth's surface is, I suppose, fairly spectacular but I found it a bit of an anti-climax. I realised a day or two later that to appreciate the canyon fully one has to view it *from the bottom looking up*. Looking down from the Rim, as most visitors do, is not the best angle since so much of the canyon is lost from view and because there are no features close at hand to judge the scale against.

In any event I had not come here just to gawp at the view; I had mammals to find. The first took only moments as a Grey-collared Chipmunk presented itself at the Visitor Centre. And shortly afterwards

I found several obliging Rock Squirrels along the Rim. I had been told that Chipmunks were common around the Visitor Centre but I couldn't add to my initial success and went for a shuttle ride to Kaibab Point. Here, a pair of Cooper's Hawks were circling below me, followed soon after by a Red-tailed Hawk. A little way along the Rim I glimpsed a dull coloured Chipmunk as it scuttled off behind some rocks. Probably Cliff Chipmunk though I couldn't be sure. Returning to the Visitor Centre I found several Mule Deer and Red Deer as well as lots of Mountain Chickadees and a White-breasted Nuthatch.

That evening, at the El Tovar Lodge, I met up with the other participants in the next day's trek and with Doug Campbell, the guide, who briefed us on the next three days' activities.

Day 5: October 15th

We set off before dawn loaded only with day packs, the bulk of our gear having already been consigned to mules – who had already made a clear head start on us. Our objective was the Bright Angel Campground, some seven and a half miles distant along the Kaibab Trail which would take us on a meandering route from rim to valley floor. The Kaibab is not a very rich wildlife area but I hoped we might see Bighorn Sheep somewhere along the trail.

The journey down took about six hours during which time we found only a Cooper's Hawk and a few other common birds. We reached the valley floor just after midday with the sun blazing and the air temperature approaching 30 degrees. But our selected camp site, adjacent to Bright Angel Creek, was well shaded and we could soon bathe our aching feet and calf muscles in the cool water of the stream.

The rangers, whose station is nearby at Phantom Ranch, offer twice-daily talks on subjects to do with the canyon and its history and that afternoon we joined quite a large gathering to listen to one on the infamous Kolb brothers (who did much to publicise and promote the canyon in the 1920s and 1930s). Twice the talk was interrupted by the appearance of a Grey Fox – the second time appearing only twenty metres away from where I was sitting. This was not to be the last time wildlife was to attend one of these talks.....

That evening, with the ranger well into a discourse on canyon geology, we were interrupted by the sudden and (to me) unexpected arrival of a Ringtail. Interest in geology was abruptly postponed as most people turned to catch a glimpse of the interloper. I quickly moved into position to get a better look and for a few glorious seconds found myself only feet away from my target. The animal stood gazing at the assembled spectators before sauntering off into thick scrub. But I had had a great view and sat in smug contentment as the ranger went on for another half hour with her geology lesson.

Later, I tried to re-locate the Ringtail with a bit of spotlighting in and around camp but to no avail. Nevertheless, I went to bed at just after 21.00 feeling extremely pleased with myself.

Day 6: October 16th

A pretty lazy day. I spent the morning searching the nearby trails along the main Colorado River for Bighorn Sheep (where a couple of fellow trekkers had spotted some the previous evening). Predictably, found nothing.

The afternoon lecture again saw the appearance of the Grey Fox. Three wildlife encounters in three lectures couldn't just be co-incidence and I began to see a pattern. Could wildlife around the campsite be so habituated to human presence that it was actually *attracted* to large gatherings of people, associating human activity with cooking and food? I attended the evening lecture full of hope that the Ringtail might appear once more, but the cycle was broken and the ranger finished her talk (on early canyon exploration) without being interrupted by wildlife. She did, however, show us some Bark Scorpions afterwards and confirmed that the small and highly agile little bats that we had seen emerging well before dusk earlier were in fact Western Pipistrelles (as I had suspected).

Of course I set off once more with the spotlight to see if I could find the Ringtail and about half an hour later found one moving along the side of the creek. I lost it fairly quickly but got good views of its outrageous tail with its bold black and white hoops. I continued down to the confluence of the creek and the Colorado River before doubling back along the camp trail, finding a Grey Fox and a Western Spotted Skunk. Back at camp I ran into Doug who informed me that the group had been watching a pair of Ringtails in a tree overlooking our camp site for the last half hour. Typical!



Ringtail, Bright Angel Campground, Grand Canyon, Arizona.

Luckily, the Ringtails were still in town and I had glorious views of the pair only a few metres away and even took a few pictures. Bright Angel Creek had lived up to its Ringtail reputation – bigtime!

Day 7: October 17th

Pre-dawn breakfast consisting of a completely indigestible “energy bar”, the uncomfortable effects of which I endured for the next two or three hours. Turning on my headlamp to make some coffee I

got bright yellow eyeshine only ten feet away – one of the Ringtails was back! Very nice to get one final look at this iconic creature.

The return journey up to the South Rim took us up the Bright Angel Trail, a good route apparently for both Bighorn Sheep and Californian Condor. But neither wanted to oblige us and we slogged up the nine and a bit miles without seeing any wildlife save for a few Rock Squirrels and a Canyon Wren. Nobody died, though some came fairly close, and in the late afternoon we made it to the Rim and a welcome glass of “Fat Tyre” beer in the Bright Angel Lodge bar.

Day 8: October 18th

With unfinished business in the Aubrey Valley (ie the Badger) I decided to spend the afternoon at the Flagstaff Arboretum before heading westwards once more to Seligman.

The Arboretum really is a gem. It is a highly rated spot for the otherwise difficult Abert’s Squirrel and the guys in the Visitor Centre could hardly have been more helpful when I explained that that was what I had come to see. Armed with a site map and lots of detailed information on where to look I set off full of hope, even though it was by now midday and the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky.

Heading towards what was reckoned to be the hot area, (the nature trail behind the Horticulture Centre), I soon found a dark brown ground squirrel with a pale stripe down its flank and a ruff of golden-brown fur around its neck. This was the Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, a species which I knew was on the cards but which I hadn’t reckoned on seeing here. I got very good views before losing it in long grass and scrub.

Moving onto the Outer Nature Trail (beyond a deer fence which protects the Arboretum’s plants from wildlife) I started looking for Abert’s Squirrel in earnest. However, at the edge of a very expansive area of grassland, I noticed an interesting information panel on Pronghorn. Apparently this was good habitat for Pronghorn and Red Deer though it warned that both “would probably already have melted away at the visitor’s approach”. A quick scan wouldn’t do any harm I thought and pointed my binoculars at the middle distance. I had got about half way along my intended scan when suddenly animals – Pronghorn! – came into view. Better to be lucky than good!

I continued along the path studying the Ponderosa pines for signs of Abert’s Squirrel. Lots of Chipmunks, all Gey-collared, scurried about and it took me a little while to find what I was looking for. But, quite suddenly, a large and very striking white, grey and black Squirrel appeared on the ground twenty metres in front of me. Before long I had found a second and got even better views though neither stayed around long enough for a picture.

That evening I checked into the Supai Motel in Seligman and once more set off in search of Ferrets and, this time I hoped, a Badger. But it was not to be. Four hours of searching proved fruitless and apart from a Desert Cottontail, a Jackrabbit and what was probably a Pronghorn, (single bright yellow eyeshine high off the ground and galloping rapidly away), I found nothing. Reluctantly I gave up on the Badger and at 01.00 returned to the Supai.

Day 9: October 19th

With three days booked at Cave Creek Ranch a couple of days hence and a lot of miles lying between Seligman and Cave Creek I decided to start heading South with Montezuma's Well and Montezumas Castle being the main objectives for today. I was hoping for Arizona Grey Squirrel and whatever else was available.

Arrived at Montezuma's Well around midday in scorching heat and with wildlife activity absolutely zero. Couldn't possibly have timed it worse! Spent the rest of the afternoon at the Castle (which is an interesting historical site in its own right). Later, as temperatures cooled, some activity occurred and I got Cliff Chipmunk (twice) on the exposed rocky cliffs and a few birds, including Red-shafted Flicker. But, despite much searching, no Arizona Grey Squirrels. Back at the Visitor Centre I saw that a Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake had been spotted earlier but I think the staff had removed it in the interests of public safety.

I checked into the "Days Inn" motel in Camp Verde and had an early night.

Day 10: October 20th

The mission for today was twofold: visit Casa Grande Ruins for Round-tailed Ground Squirrel and get as far east as possible to allow the maximum time the following day at Cave Creek.

And Mission Accomplished! The Squirrel took all of three minutes to find with several active in dusty scrub beside the Visitor Centre. I was even able to take a few pictures. Talking to a volunteer ranger afterwards I learned that there is quite a lot more to Casa Grande than it first appears; Kit Fox is seen from time to time, there are Great Horned Owls roosting in the roof of the Visitor Centre and several species of Bat (including Mexican Free-tailed Bat) roost in the ruins themselves. But the site closes at 17.00 and so most of the interesting stuff is off limits.

Leaving Casa Grande at about 14.00, I burned up some mileage and got as far west as Willcox where I checked into a cheesy looking motel charging a modest \$35 a night.

Day 11: October 21st

With Cave Creek being a self-catering arrangement and with no fuel being available reliably east of San Simon I began by stocking up on provisions at the local Safeway supermarket and filling the car's tank up to bursting point. Then I sped down to Cave Creek, taking the tarmac route via I-10 to Road Forks, the Route 80 south to Rodeo and the local road west to Portal. It is possible to take a short cut on a gravel road south from San Simon but it wouldn't necessarily be any quicker given the poor state of the road.

Arrived at Cave Creek Ranch late morning and pulled up outside the office. A Coue's White-tailed Deer was happily grazing a few metres away and remained oblivious to my arrival. Of more interest was a White-nosed Coati which was destroying a bird feeder in its eagerness to eat the suet it contained. An important target species safely in the bag with zero expenditure of effort!

In the office I checked in and met the proprietor, Reed Peters. Explaining my interest in mammals, Reed provided me with a map of the local trails and a heap of information on where best to look for my various target species. The area is not just rich in mammals but is also an absolute Mecca for

birders with a long list of species recorded, including the much-sought Mexican Chickadee and Elegant Trogon. And, without much effort, I quickly logged Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Curve-billed Thrasher, Hen Harrier, Northern Cardinal and House Finch.



White-nosed Coati destroying bird feeder, Cave Creek Ranch, Arizona.

After lunch I got cracking on the search for Black Bear which Reed assured me were moving westwards along the canyon and were likely to be seen on the nearby Sunny Flat Trail. Knowing that one could bump into a Bear at any moment is quite exciting and I moved along the trail fairly cautiously. Black Bears are not especially aggressive but the prospect of meeting one at close quarters on foot does add a certain frisson to proceedings! But unfortunately I reached the end of the trail without meeting any Bears, though when speaking to some people at the Sunny Flat Campsite later I discovered that Bears were at Stewart Campsite (half way along the Sunny Flat Trail) only an hour or two earlier. I must have missed them by the narrowest of margins and doubled back in the hope of them still being around. They weren't but my hopes had been raised and I was optimistic of finding them soon.

Back at the ranch I mooched around at dusk looking for emerging nocturnals and quickly found Eastern Cottontail and Rock Squirrel. The gaudy and unmistakable Gambel's Quail was on the access road, where I hoped but failed to find Harris' Antelope Ground Squirrel. Before it got fully dark I put out some bait in a likely spot behind my cabin (cat food) and set two small Sherman traps baited with biscuit crumbs. The cat food was intended for Ringtail and the traps for small rodents such as Deermice.

Around the office I found Bats giving dry, rattling echo-location calls in the 44-50 Khz range. The Bats were medium sized with a fast, direct flight and visibly grey underparts. Ordinarily this would not be enough for a positive ID but I had an ace up my sleeve. Earlier in the year, in May, an extensive Bat Survey had been carried out at Cave Creek Ranch with quite a large number of Bats being caught and examined at various locations on the ranch. Reed had been kind enough to give me a copy of the report – which revealed that of the 13 Bats netted in the courtyard outside the office (where I was getting the echo-location calls) 10 were identified as Mexican Long-tongued Bat. And there was good reason for this species to be here: namely Reed's big collection of Hummingbird feeders which hung from trees hereabouts. Long-tongued Bats have long tongues (!) and are well known to like drinking the sugary water available in these feeders. And so, since I was getting lots of sightings and calls from one particular species at this exact spot, it was reasonable to conclude that what I was seeing was indeed the Mexican Long-tongued Bat.

After dinner I went out again to drive the Portal Road in the hope of Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat but found only a small long-tailed rodent (possibly Desert Pocket Mouse) which I could not definitively identify.

Day 12: October 22nd

Nothing had visited the bait during the night and the traps were both untouched so I took a pre-breakfast stroll up the access road looking for Harris Antelope Ground Squirrel. Again, nothing showed.

The main morning job was to find Apache Fox Squirrel on the South Fork Trail about three miles away. I expected this to be a time-consuming exercise but within minutes of starting along the trail I found one. And immediately I understood how the animal gets its name - the tail is absolutely colossal and distinctly like a fox's brush. It behaved itself sufficiently well for me to get a rather poor photograph but then found itself under attack from an Acorn Woodpecker which chased it up a tree! I continued for a short way along the trail but found nothing else and decided to abandon the trail in favour of a renewed search for Black Bear. This too was unproductive and by lunchtime I was back at the ranch trying once more for Harris' Antelope Ground Squirrel.

I crept along the gravel access road and, at last, on reaching the junction with South Old Canyon Road I noticed a small animal scuttle off under cover. Waiting patiently, I was rewarded five minutes later when my target re-appeared and moved out into the open. Success! And a bit later a second came out a bit further down the road. With two good new species under my belt I retired for a well earned lunch.

More unproductive searching for Black Bear in the afternoon, with a heavy focus on the area around Stewart Campsite and the Sunny Flat Trail. Having tramped miles and spent long hours failing to find Black Bear away from the ranch it was ironic that I then finally succeeded on my doorstep! At dusk I took a stroll around the ranch to see what was about and found myself down by the creek about 100 metres from my cabin. I pointed my spotlight up the creek and immediately got very bright eyeshine at around 70 metres. I assumed it was White-tailed Deer but checked with binoculars just to be sure. But this turned out to be no Deer and a fully adult Black Bear filled my field of view! I watched it for about thirty seconds before it disappeared in the direction of my cabin. I tracked back to try to intercept it but without luck. Nevertheless, a terrific sighting!

Later I tried the Portal Road again for Kangaroo Rats but found only the sad sight of a mortally wounded Black-tailed Rattlesnake which obviously had been run over.

Day 13: October 23rd

Reed had told me about the possibility of Kit Fox at the junction of Paradise Road and the Foothills Road (about six or seven miles away from the ranch) and so I spent the morning on a recce to see how feasible nocturnal spotlighting might be. The habitat looked good (desert scrub and open grassland) and the area seemed suitable for spotlighting so I decided to try it later that evening. In the hot sun everything was quiet though I did get a brief look at a Cliff Chipmunk as it dashed across the road and up a rocky slope near the ghost town of Paradise.

More for the sake of some exercise rather than in the hope of seeing anything special I spent the afternoon walking the McCord Trail to the east of the ranch. Here, the views are spectacular and I scanned all around in the vague but unfulfilled hope of Collared Peccary. But I found only an American Kestrel and a few unidentifiable flycatchers, (the standard model: brown backs, yellow fronts, two white wing bars, white eye ring and a short straight black bill- the profile met by several pages of species in the bird book). Arriving back at the creek I found a Tarantula Spider on the rocks, the second of the trip.

The evening's spotlighting failed to turn up a Kit Fox though it did produce three Grey Foxes and an Eastern Cottontail. That night, at about 01.30, I was woken by the sound of movement outside. Something at last was on my bait! I got up and crept outside with the torch and binoculars. Half expecting a Black Bear I was a little deflated to find only a small creature – displaying a fluffy white tail. It was obviously a Skunk though I was unable to tell which species as it fled the scene before I could get onto it properly. Twice more it returned during the night but each time I couldn't identify it. At dawn, when I checked the area in daylight, all the bait had gone and one of my traps was shut and dislodged. Alas it was empty; I guessed that the greedy Skunk had poked a paw inside, set off the release and dragged it from its original position as it struggled to free its leg.

Day 14: October 24th

My three days at Cave Creek were up and it was time to drive back to Phoenix and begin the tortuous journey home.

But one last treat remained; a group of Collared Peccaries had visited and were grubbing around outside the office, eating fallen scraps of bird food from the many feeders hanging overhead. Five Coue's White-tailed Deer were also in attendance and I hung around for a while to get some pictures.

But at midday it was time to leave and I took a slow, easy drive back to Phoenix for the late evening flight to Charlotte and thence home to London Gatwick.

4 Lists of Species Recorded

4.1 Mammals

Species	Latin Name	Location
Black-footed Ferret	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	Aubrey Valley
Ringtail	<i>Bassariscus astutus</i>	Bright Angel Campground
White-nosed Coati	<i>Nasua narica</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Grey Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	Cave Creek environs
Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Striped Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>	Aubrey Valley
Western Spotted Skunk	<i>Spilogale gracilis</i>	Bright Angel Campground
Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	Flagstaff Arboretum
Coue's White-tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Cave Creek environs
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Grand Canyon Sth Rim
Red Deer (Elk)	<i>Cervus elephas</i>	Grand Canyon Sth Rim
Collared Peccary (Javelina)	<i>Pecari tajacu</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Western Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus hesperus</i>	Bright Angel Campground
Mexican Long-tongued Bat	<i>Choeronycteris mexicana</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Black-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	Aubrey Valley
Desert Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus Audubonii</i>	Aubrey Valley
Eastern Cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Gunnison's Prairie Dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>	Aubrey Valley
Ord's Kangaroo Rat	<i>Dipodomys ordii</i>	Aubrey Valley
Round-tailed Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus tereticaudus</i>	Casa Grande
Rock Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus Variegatus</i>	Grand Canyon Sth Rim
Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	<i>Spermophilus lateralis</i>	Flagstaff Arboretum
Harris' Antelope Ground Squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus harrisi</i>	Cave Creek Ranch
Apache Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus nayaritensis</i>	South Fork Trail
Abert's Squirrel	<i>Sciurus Aberti</i>	Flagstaff Arboretum
Cliff Chipmunk	<i>Tamias Dorsalis</i>	Montezuma's Castle
Grey-collared Chipmunk	<i>Tamias cinereicollis</i>	Flagstaff Arboretum
Total Species Recorded	27	

4.2 Birds

Species	Latin Name	Notes
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Seen over desert scrub east of Benson.
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Pair quartering Aubrey Valley; Ringtail at Cave Creek.
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	One individual in tree at Cave Creek Ranch.
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Several in Grand Canyon.
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Common in Aubrey Valley and Grand Canyon.
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	One in Aubrey Valley; one near Road Forks NM.
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	One on McCord trail Cave Creek Ranch.
Gambel's Quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	Common at Cave Creek Ranch.
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Surprisingly uncommon; a few in larger towns.
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Widespread; common in Seligman.
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	Flocks seen several times at Cave Creek Ranch.
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	A few in towns.
Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	One on farm track in Aubrey Valley.
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	Seen on South Rim of Grand Canyon.
Broad-billed Hummingbird	<i>Cynanthus latirostris</i>	On feeders at Cave Creek Ranch.
Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>	On feeders at cave Creek Ranch.
Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	On feeders at Cave Creek Ranch.
Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	Very common at Cave Creek Ranch.
Red-shafted Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Very common at Cave Creek Ranch.
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i>	One at Cave Creek Ranch.
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	Several at Flagstaff Arboretum.
Western Scrub Jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica</i>	Abundant in and around Grand Canyon.
Mexican Jay	<i>Aphelocoma ultramarina</i>	Very common at Cave Creek Ranch.
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Common in towns.
Common Raven	<i>Corvus Corax</i>	Abundant at higher altitudes, esp Grand Canyon.
Bridled Titmouse	<i>Baelophus wollweberi</i>	One at Cave Creek Ranch.
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>	Common along South Rim of Grand Canyon.
Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	One at Cave Creek Ranch.
Bushtit	<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	Several at Cave Creek Ranch.
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	One in Seligman.
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	One in Grand Canyon.
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	One at Casa Grande Ruins.
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>	One along Bright Angel Trail; one on Sunny Flat Trail.
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	Several at Cave Creek Ranch.
Curve-billed Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>	One at Cave Creek Ranch.
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Several around Cave Creek.
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	Common around Cave Creek.
Black-chinned Sparrow	<i>Spizella atrogularis</i>	Flock outside Desert Museum, Rodeo.
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	Pair at Cave Creek Ranch.
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	Widespread.
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Several at Cave Creek Ranch
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Several at Cave Creek Ranch.
Pyrruloxia	<i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i>	Two at Cave Creek Ranch.
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Common in Aubrey Valley.
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	Common in Seligman.
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	Common in Seligman.
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Common at Cave Creek Ranch.
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Common around human habitation.
Total Species Recorded	48	

5.3 Other Species

Species	Latin Name	Notes
Collared lizard	<i>Crotophytus collaris</i>	Common at Bright Angel Campground.
Madrean Alligator Lizard	<i>Elgaria kingii</i>	One on access road at Cave Creek Ranch.
Black-tailed Rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus molossus</i>	One found dying on Portal Road (run over).
Bark Scorpion	<i>Contruroides sculpturatus</i>	Several at Bright Angel Campground.
Grand Canyon Black Tarantula Spider	<i>Aphonopelma behlei</i>	One on Kaibab Trail; one at Cave Creek.