

The Bahamas 2014

Dec 31st-Feb 25th and March 4th-March 19th

Curtis Hart

7 species, 2 near misses

For that much time, the Bahamas were pretty unproductive. I traveled on the Abishag, a 30' sloop, we had 3-4 people onboard the entire trip. Andrew, the owner is not as into mammals, herps, or birds as I am, but was quite willing to make some stops for me, namely East Plana Cay. The route was Bimini – Berry Islands – Andros – Nassau – Exumas - Eleuthera - Exumas –Fort Lauderdale. Then Bimini – Andros – Eleuthera – Rum Cay – Crooked Island – Acklins Island – East Plana Cay – TCI. The return to Fort Lauderdale was due to our zodiac falling apart and not being able to replace it in Nassau or Georgetown.

The first mammals were 5 [Bottlenose Dolphins](#) as we were heading into Great Harbour Cay in the Berry Islands. The first miss of the trip were the [Manatees](#) the other boaters regularly saw around Great Harbour Cay's marina. We were there 14 days, due to an injury, and I never saw them. Just up the hill from Great Harbour Cay's marina is an old club house. Enter through the main entrance go past where reception was. Any of the halls to the right should have [Buffy Flower Bats](#). I counted around 100 in total. Some of them hang quite low for easy observation.



I checked the cave on Morgan's Bluff (north Andros) twice, January 20th and March 6th. There were no bats present, but there was guano, so they may inhabit the cave during parts of the year. On March 6th, we did see a bat flying over the anchorage at Morgan's Bluff at dusk.

We visited a cave on the north shore of Nassau that had 46 [Buffy Flower Bats](#) in it on January 31st. They are apparently there all the time, so an easy stop for someone on a cruise. We saw two [Bottlenose Dolphins](#) south of Nassau as we headed for the Exumas. On February 2nd, I saw two more [Bottlenose Dolphins](#) at the anchorage in Elizabeth Harbor.

Just before daybreak on February 23rd, I saw a larger cetacean in Exuma sound. Pilot Whale size, but it was still dark, so no ID.

As we headed south again we saw a large pod of dolphins about 10 miles south of Cat Island. They turned out to be [Pantropical Spotted Dolphins](#).



We were at Rum Cay for a few days, and once while out spear fishing, Andrew ended up seeing 3 [Humpbacks](#) in 45' of water. I was within 150 yards, but didn't see them. He couldn't get my attention as I was focused on a few grouper that were eluding me.

On March 15th Andrew and I randomly seemed to have stumbled upon the cave near Cripple Hill that Budon visited in 1975 and is described in the Mammalian Species Account of *Monophyllus redmani*. The day we visited there were 13 [Waterhouse's Leaf-nosed Bats](#) and a lone [Big Brown Bat](#). Not quite the numbers he described.





A couple days later we were anchored at Attwood Harbor and decided to find the blue hole pictured on the Explorer Chart. About a quarter mile down the road there is a very obvious cave. It has signs and is named, but I forget what the name was. Inside I found 10 [Big Brown Bats](#) and around 300 [Brazilian Free-tails](#).



Our last stop was East Plana Cay. After we almost collided with shallow reef, we had a pleasant row into shore. We walked around for about 3 hours starting at 9:00 am. Just look in shaded areas, and you'll find the [Bahamian Hutias](#). I didn't get satisfactory pictures though. Herp wise, the endemic *Leiocephalus greenwayi* was abundant, and we also found a pair of the beautiful *Anolis brunneus*, which my camera decided to crash the photo files for.



7 species, 4 lifers. Not great for 3.5 months, but sailing the Bahamas had other rewards. There are several more caves described online, which have plenty of bats. I was only able to visit the ones on our route.

Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)
Buffy Flower Bat (*Erophylla sezekorni*)
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella attenuatea*)
Waterhouse's Leaf-nosed Bat (*Macrotus waterhousii*)
Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)
Brazilian Free-tail (*Tadarida brasiliensis*)
Bahamian Hutia (*Geocapromys ingrahami*)