

Panama

I met my friend Kevin in Panama in October of 2008 for a two week wildlife watching trip. We used no guides and did not rent a car. We only visited two places for mammal watching before heading to Costa Rica. I stopped back by each right before I flew out as well.



Metropolitan Nature Park - This is a small area of jungle that is inside Panama City. The animals are wild however, and were not introduced. I visited the park twice, finding Geoffroy's Tamarin both times.





The Pipeline Road - Located in Soberania National park, this is an old road that follows an old oil line. I think that only the Smithsonian Institute researchers are allowed to drive on it. We took a taxi to the gate and hiked in. We did stop at the ranger station a few km before the entrance and arranged to camp there. They were surprised we wanted to, but took our money and didn't try to talk us out of it. If I had to do it again, I might not camp there. It's only a \$20 cab ride from Panama City and was almost too hot to sleep out there. There are a few other trails in the park that are probably good, but I did not explore them. The road into Gamboa is probably good for night driving late at night. There is a bit of traffic early.

We arrived about 10 am and casually hiked in 8.8 km. During the day we saw a few White-faced Capuchins, White-nosed Coatis, and Mantled Howler Monkeys. At dusk we began to hike and spent 4 hours each of the two nights hiking. The moon was perfect, rising two or three hours after sunset. It was the best night walking I've had. The best animals we saw were a pair of Western Night Monkeys, which let us watch them for several minutes. Bats were often seen, but we were not able to photograph or ID any of them. As a word of warning we did have a close call with a Fer-de-Lance on the trail. Take plenty of water as well. We both drank over 2 liters on each night hike.



Bocas Del Toro - I visited this area on a previous trip. The only mammal watching I did was the Red Frog and Dolphin tour. I wouldn't recommend it. We saw one Bottle-nose Dolphin well, but the guide said there are usually many more boats than dolphins. For such a common species it is really not worth it.

Mammal List

White-tailed Deer <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	One on the first Pipeline Road night walk.
Collared Peccary <i>Tayassu tajacu</i>	One on the first Pipeline Road night walk.
Kinkajou <i>Bassaricyon gabbi</i>	One or two each night at the Pipeline Road.
White-nosed Coati <i>Nasua narica</i>	A few every day at the Pipeline road.
Forest Rabbit <i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>	A few on each night walk at the Pipeline road.
Central American Woolly Opossum <i>Caluromys derbianus</i>	A few on each night walk at the Pipeline road.

Common Opossum <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	Several on each night walk.
White-faced Capuchin <i>Cebus capucinus</i>	Two groups of 15-20 at the Pipeline Road.
Mantled Howler Monkey <i>Alouatta palliata</i>	Seen each day at the Pipeline Road.
Geoffroy's Tamarin <i>Saguinus geoffroyi</i>	Groups of five or so were seen on both visits to the Metropolitan Park.
Western Night Monkey <i>Aotus lemurinus</i>	Two were seen very close on the second Pipeline night walk.
Rothschild's Porcupine <i>Coendou rothschildi</i>	A pair was mating on a branch on the third Pipeline night hike.
Armored Rat <i>Hoplomys gymnurus</i>	Several on the first night walk at the Pipeline road in primary forest.
Variiegated Squirrel <i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>	A few seen the second time I visited the Metropolitan Park.
Paca <i>Agouti paca</i>	A couple seen on the second and third Pipeline night walks.
Central American Agouti <i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>	A few each day spent in the field.
Northern Tamandua <i>Tamandua mexicana</i>	One on the last night walk on the Pipeline Road.
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth <i>Bradypus variegatus</i>	One just outside the Pipeline Road.
Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth <i>Choloepus hoffmani</i>	One at the Metropolitan Park. One on the Pipeline Road at night.
Nine-banded Armadillo <i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>	1-6 each night on the Pipeline Road.