

Nicaragua Mammal Extravaganza, Feb 4-17, 2015

Led by Fiona Reid and Jose Gabriel Martinez, with Mike Richardson and Paul Carter. Photos by Fiona except where noted.

Feb 04, Laguna del Apoyo (LA)

Our trip officially started on Feb 5, but we all landed a day early, with Paul arriving in the late morning. I asked Jose to see if he could get some help setting up nets and still find time to collect me and Mike from the airport at 9 p.m. We met up with Paul and two friends of Jose's at a location near our hotel on the Laguna just after 10 p.m. They had caught 7 species of bats, including **Common Vampire** and **Central American Yellow Bat**. Of note Paul had also seen 3 **Southern Spotted Skunks**, a **Vesper Rat**, **Common Opossum** and a **Central American Woolly Opossum**



Southern Spotted Skunk (Paul Carter)

(last of which obligingly stayed around for me and Mike). We were off to a great start!

Feb 05, Apoyo and Montibelli (MB)



Jamaican Fruit-eating Bat, stained yellow with pollen

We spent the morning at Apoyo, where **Mantled Howlers** and **Variiegated Squirrel** are easily seen. In the afternoon we went to Montibelli Private Reserve. We located roosting **Lesser White-lined Bats** on a tree trunk and some **Jamaican Fruit-eating Bats** hidden in leaves of a *Dracaena* plant (we caught both these species later too). After seeing a



Greater Spear-nosed Bats in roost (Paul Carter)

good variety of dry forest birds and our first **Central American Agouti**, we set up a few nets and caught **Greater** and **Pale Spear-nosed Bats** along with various other common species (see list). We had a really nice dinner prepared for us during battling. We saw several **Common Opossums** here and on our drive out, and also located a roost of Greater Spear-nosed Bats in a hollow tree.

Feb 06, Apoyo and Masaya Volcano (MV)

We explored other parts of Apoyo in the morning and after lunch headed to Masaya. Our first stop was an abandoned kitchen where we saw and captured **Gray Sac-winged Bats** and **Brown Long-tongued Bats**. We then went to the lava tubes, and were lucky to be there before the regular tourists. The ceilings were full of mormoopid bats,



Gray Sac-winged Bat

an amazing sight. We caught 3 of the 5 resident species: **Davy's Naked-backed Bat** and **Common** and **Lesser Mustached Bats**. We entered a small side tunnel where Jose knew there was a colony of **Hairy-legged Vampires**. We caught one of these lovely bats for a photo op. This tunnel also housed **Seba's Short-tailed Bats**. At dusk we watched a shift change as Pacific Parakeets headed to roost in the volcano and bats emerged from the tubes. We then took a long night drive in search of a spotted skunk for Mike (no luck). At some of the small water holes we found a good variety of herps including the lovely Green Vine Snake. Fiona spotted a family of 3 **Northern Raccoons** in a tree and while we were examining them Jose noticed there was a **Mexican Porcupine** in the same tree. After looking at a Great Potoo we headed back to Apoyo for the night.

Feb 07, Playa Coco and Escamequita (EQ)



We set off in the morning for Playa Coco, about 2 hours south. We were really happy with our upscale condo and huge deserted beach! After some free time a late lunch, we had a very close visit with **Mantled Howlers** and a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl beside our condo. We then headed to a private reserve at Escamequita (Jose had arranged permission for us to enter at night).



Striped Hog-nosed Skunk (Paul Carter)

A small stream through a forest tract proved extremely productive for mammals. We had very close views of several **Striped Hog-nosed Skunks**, and good looks at **Gray Four-eyed, Virginia, Common, and Central American Woolly Opossums**. Paul and Jose saw **Southern Spotted Skunk**, but despite Mike's best efforts it eluded him. Paul also saw a **Jaguarundi** coming to the water to drink. We had our first looks at **Kinkajou** and **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth**. The batting was very good as well, with both **Greater and Lesser Fishing Bat, Argentine Brown Bat** and some common species.

Then Jose calmly told me he had just caught a **Spectral** or **Great False Vampire Bat!** The largest species in the New World, Jaguar of bats! On the way back we drove a few small roads and found **Hooded Skunk**, wrapping up a great evening of mammal-watching.

Feb 08, Escameca Grande (EG)

In the morning we set off to Escameca Grande, where a sizable river cuts through a private reserve with some of the best riparian forest in this dry region. We found some roosting **Greater White-lined Bats** and few **Common**



Salvin's Spiny Pocket Mouse

Big-eared Bats in a hollow tree in the forest. I'd netted this area before and I was determined to find some pools on the dry portion of the river. Our local guide Pedro and Jose both said the river was completely dry in the upper watershed, but I wasn't impressed with the very large pools near the farm and eventually Pedro suggested we try the hot springs.

What hot springs? Jose and I didn't know about them at all, and Pedro led us to the perfect spot, deep in the forest where the river was mostly dry but there were a few small cold pools and a very hot pool too! We set three nets, one over the hot, sulfur-

scented pool and two over cool pools in the river bed. The guys left me thinking I'd be able to relax (cold beer, warm pool...), but very soon bats started hitting the nets, and from 6 to 8 p.m. I



Hooded Skunk (Paul Carter)



Wrinkle-faced Bat

caught about 150-200 bats of 21 different species! I was starting to worry that they had all got lost when they finally reappeared, bringing a **Salvin's Spiny Pocket Mouse** that Jose had caught by hand. Paul and Mike also saw the first **Olingo** of the trip here, and another **Striped Hog-nosed Skunk**. I'd caught a number of bats that Jose really wanted to see, so he was very happy. These included **Niceforo's Bat**, **Stripe-headed**, **Pygmy** and **White-throated Round-eared Bats**, **Tiny Big-eared Bat**, **Wrinkle-faced Bat**, and my very first **Bonda Mastiff Bat**. On our way back after a long bat photo session, we saw another **Hooded Skunk**. Another fantastic night.

Feb 09-10, Rio Papaturre and Los Guatusos (LG)



Kinkajou from canopy walk (Paul Carter)

We set off early, picking up Jose's brother Francisco en route (he drove the truck back home for us). We boarded a boat at Sapoia and set off along the south part of Lake Nicaragua. It was quite rough and we saw a few birds, but not a lot until we entered the Rio Papaturre. This river is the world HQ of Green Iguana and Pygmy Kingfisher – I've never seen so many huge orange male iguanas! We saw a great variety of water birds, our first **Central American Spider Monkeys**, and Spectacled Caiman, as well as two

species of basilisk. After about an hour of slow travel stopping for wildlife, we arrived at Los Guatusos, a

rather basic lodge set right next to the river and forest. I shared my room with about 20 **Common Long-tongued Bats**. We ate in the nearby small village. The staff guide, Murillo, took us for a walk around the property as neither Jose nor I had been there before, though Jose had done some netting nearby. We were all surprised to find a series of canopy bridges close to the station through very nice forest and over a small stream. I was really excited about setting nets on the canopy walk, although there were various wires which might limit the bats' flight

paths. I set up two nets on the shorter and more stable bridges while Jose set one over the long and very wobbly bridge. Of course I was the one stuck on the bridge untangling a small hummingbird on the scary bridge later that night! At first it seemed like a bit of a bust as we caught only **Jamaican** and **Great Fruit-eating Bats**, but a bit later we got our second **Great False Vampire** and our second **Wrinkle-faced Bat**. Two very rare species twice in one trip!



Great False Vampire or Spectral Bat

On my way to and from the bridge I had a close encounter with a **Gray Four-eyed Opossum**, also seen by the others, and we all saw a number of **Tomes' Spiny Rats** which we managed to trap that night. During our two days we had great views of all three species of monkey, including **White-faced Capuchins**, and all three used the canopy walk each night. Agoutis were abundant near the station and we also



White-faced Capuchin (Paul Carter)



Greater Fishing Bat hanging out

saw a **Dusky Rice Rat** under an abandoned car near the neighboring small army base. We had eye to eye views of **Kinkajou** from the canopy walk. On our second night we left Jose with some ground-level nets and three of us went on a night boat trip. Highlights were mainly reptilian, but we did see a **Greater Fishing Bat** perched on a tree, and some **Proboscis Bats** on another tree trunk. Jose caught 4 **Fringe-lipped Bats** and two **White-throated Round-eared Bats**, **Black Myotis** and **Riparian Myotis**, as well as various common species. Our boat guide Carmen took us to see a **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth** on a tree in the village. I'd been trying to find tent-making bats in the forest and I finally located a large group of **Common Tent-making Bats** right by the main bridge in the village.

Feb 11, Rio Papaturo to Refugio Bartola (RB)

The day of many boat rides! We started off in a private boat from Lost Guatusos back up the Papaturo. We saw a Common Boa en route, as well as many birds but fewer iguanas. In San Carlos we stopped for lunch but had to pack it and run to get the ferry to El Castillo. From El Castillo Tomas collected us and took us to Refugio Bartola. We took a short land break and Mike spotted at **Neotropical River Otter** across the river. We had good looks at this uncommon



Common Boa



Yapok or Water Opossum

mammal. But we hadn't had enough of boats and after dinner we went out in search of our main quarry at Bartola. We went upriver, getting out to walk on the bank while Tomas dragged the canoe through rapids, until Jose spotted eyeshine of our quarry, the **Yapok** or **Water Opossum**.

Jose took off like a streak and grabbed the opossum which I dropped into a pillowcase. We had to go back for Jose's camera but decided to return to the Yapok's home to release and

photograph him there. I managed not to get bitten (well only a little bitten through the pillowcase). In addition to the wonderful **Water Opossum** we saw 3 **Paca**, an **Armored Rat**, and an Annulated Boa on our trips up and down river. Another very successful mammal watching day despite being mostly a travel day.

Feb 12-13, Refugio Bartola (RB)

We had two full days and nights at this very nice location. A group from UCLA was also staying and made for good company. We located various bats at roosts including two localities for **Smoky Bats**, a very rare species, some **Greater White-lined Bats** in an old latrine, and two locations for **Spix's Disk-winged Bat**, which managed to escape capture and were only seen well by Jose and me, unfortunately. Bat netting was slow and we didn't catch anything too exciting, but got our first **Silky** (now **Sowell's**) **Short-tailed Bats**. One of the most exciting finds for me was a velvet worm! Jose found it under an oil drum. OK, not a mammal but a whole new phylum! One night all but me saw an **Olingo**



Long-whiskered Rice Rat

very well. It was unusual in being orangish in color, very similar to **Allen's Olingo**, currently known only from Panama and southward. We caught **Dusky Rice Rat** and several **Long-whiskered Rice Rats**. All three monkey species were seen here too. Jose delivered a good variety of snakes, anoles and other herps for all to enjoy.

Feb 14-15, Bartola to Reserva El Jaguar (EJ)

We left extremely early and got the fast boat to San Carlos. Francisco was waiting with Jose's mother's Jeep which Francisco had driven down the previous night. We dropped him at a bus station and continued north to Reserva El Jaguar in Jinotega. This is a beautiful location at



Vesper Rat

about 1200 m elevation, with a mix of coffee, banana and cloud forest, with very comfortable rooms and lots of space. We had two mammal-filled days and nights here.

Mike soon discovered two sheds full of open bags of corn, and plenty of mammals visiting the stash. In the day, **Deppes, Richmond's and Variegated Squirrels** called in, and at night **Mexican Deer Mouse, House Mouse, Vesper Rat, and Slender Harvest Mouse** were seen and trapped



Western Red Bat

in these sheds. The first night we netted bats down near a stream we passed on the way in. Here we got a lovely **Western Red Bat** and **Salvin's Big-eyed Bat** and a **Toltec Fruit-eating Bat**, and our first **Common Big-eared Bat** in hand (we'd seen it roosting earlier). There was a fruiting tree close to the nets where numerous opossums were seen (woolly and common) and also at least two **Bushy-tailed Olingos** and two **Kinkajous**.

A **Forest Rabbit** was seen by Jose and finally tracked down the next day by Mike. Our second night I stayed with three nets set in an area between coffee and forest, pointed out to me by the owner, Georges Duriaux, the past year as a good crossing point for mammals. I heard a family of three **Kinkajous** waking up and moving around in a large tree and tried to attract them into camera range by squeaking. No luck. Batting was slow so I took a short break, and when I went back to the nets there was



Bushy-tailed Olingo (Paul Carter)



Central American Woolly Opossum

an **Ocelot** on the road between two of my nets, sniffing the air, looking for the squeaker no

doubt. It was very close (20 feet roughly) when I saw it, but no amount of squeaking brought it back into view when Paul and Jose joined me a few minutes later. Needless to say I'd left my camera in the car, but I did have excellent views of this wonderful cat. We later went for a night drive and had great looks at several more **Olingos, Common Opossums, Gray Fox**, and two **Woolly Opossums**, including seeing one plummet about 20 feet, stopping its fall with its prehensile tail and apparently avoiding another in the same tree (photo of tail-save on left).

Feb 16-17, Datanli El Diablo (DD)

We left after breakfast and headed to Datanli for one night. The rather basic accommodations here are nestled under a high forested mountain. We took traps and nets with us up the mountain and enjoyed a wetter, mossier cloud forest than at El Jaguar. I set some traps up a small stream where I've had good luck in the past. We set several nets along a broad open trail between forest and coffee fields, and one net over a stream near the lodge. In a couple of hours we had added a few



Zeledon's Mouse Opossum

more bats to our list: **Hairy-legged Myotis** (and **Hairy-legged Vampire** seen earlier), **Big Naked-backed Bat**, and **Honduran Yellow-shouldered Bat**, a new one for Jose. We then went for a long night drive which didn't produce new species but gave us good views of a **Bushy-tailed Olingo**, 4 **Kinkajous**, our second **Gray Fox** and several **Common Opossums**. In the morning we went back up the mountain where we had caught numerous **Mexican Deer Mice** (about 50% trap success), two **Forest Spiny Pocket Mice** and to my delight a **Zeledon's Mouse Opossum** along the small stream. We also caught several **Alfaro's Rice Rats** both here and down near the lodge. After photographing and releasing our captures we headed out, well pleased with our grand total of **87 mammals in 13 nights!** We had lunch near Matagalpa and Jose dropped me and Paul at the Best Western by the airport. Jose continued on with Mike for two more days. I'll note their additional species below but Mike will provide a report on where, when and how they were found.

Mammal list Nicaragua Feb 4-17, 2015 (and ext. Feb 17-19, 2015) For code locations, see above

Opossums

Common Opossum, <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>	LA, MB, EQ, RB, EJ, DD
Virginia Opossum, <i>D. virginiana</i>	EQ
Central American Woolly Opossum, <i>Caluromys derbianus</i>	LA, MB, MV, EQ, EG, LG, RB, EJ
Gray Four-eyed Opossum, <i>Philander opossum</i>	EQ, LG, EJ
Water Opossum or Yapok, <i>Chironectes minimus</i>	RB
Zeledon's Mouse Opossum, <i>Marmosa zeledoni</i>	DD

Bats

Proboscis Bat, <i>Rhynchonycteris naso</i>	LG, RB
Greater White-lined Bat, <i>Saccopteryx bilineata</i>	EG, LG, RB
Lesser White-lined Bat, <i>Saccopteryx leptura</i>	LA, MB, LG
Gray Sac-winged Bat, <i>Balantiopteryx plicata</i>	MV
Smoky Bat, <i>Cyttarops alecto</i>	RB
Greater Fishing Bat, <i>Noctilio leporinus</i>	EQ, EG, LG, RB
Lesser Fishing Bat, <i>N. albiventris</i>	EQ
Greater Spear-nosed Bat, <i>Phyllostomus hastatus</i>	MB
Pale Spear-nosed Bat, <i>P. discolor</i>	MB
Common Big-eared Bat, <i>Micronycteris microtis</i>	EG, EJ
Tiny Big-eared Bat, <i>M. minuta</i>	EG
Pygmy Round-eared Bat, <i>Lophostoma brasiliense</i>	EG

White-throated Round-eared Bat, <i>L. silvicolum</i>	EG, LG
Niceforo's Bat, <i>Trinycteris nicefori</i>	EG
Stripe-headed Round-eared Bat, <i>Tonatia saurophila</i>	EG
Fringe-lipped Bat, <i>Trachops cirrhosus</i>	LG
Great False Vampire Bat, <i>Vampyrum spectrum</i>	EQ, LG
Greater Fruit-eating Bat, <i>Artibeus lituratus</i>	MB, EQ, EG, RB
Jamaican Fruit-eating Bat, <i>A. jamaicensis</i>	LA, MB, EQ, EG, LG, RB, EJ, DD
Watson's Fruit-eating Bat, <i>A. watsoni</i>	LA, EQ, EG, EJ, DD
Pygmy Fruit-eating Bat, <i>A. phaeotis</i>	MB, EQ, EG, LG
Toltec Fruit-eating Bat, <i>A. toltecus</i>	EJ, DD
Salvin's Big-eyed Bat, <i>Chiroderma salvini</i>	EJ
Common Tent-making Bat, <i>Uroderma bilobatum</i>	LG
Heller's Broad-nosed Bat, <i>Platyrrhinus helleri</i>	LA, MB
Little Yellow-shouldered Bat, <i>Sturnira lilium</i>	LA, MB, EQ, EG, LG
Honduran Yellow-shouldered Bat, <i>S. hondurensis</i>	DD
Wrinkle-faced Bat, <i>Centurio senex</i>	EG, LG
Seba's Short-tailed Bat, <i>Carollia perspicillata</i>	LA, MB, MV, EQ, EG, LG, RB
Sowell's Short-tailed Bat, <i>Carollia sowellii</i>	RB, EJ, DD
Gray Short-tailed Bat, <i>C. subrufa</i>	EG
Chestnut Short-tailed Bat, <i>C. castanea</i>	LG, RB
Common Long-tongued Bat, <i>Glossophaga soricina</i>	LA, MB, EQ, EG, LG,
Brown Long-tongued Bat, <i>G. commissarisi</i>	MV, RB
Common Vampire, <i>Desmodus rotundus</i>	LA, MB, EQ, EG, LG, EJ, DD
Hairy-legged Vampire, <i>Diphylla ecuadata</i>	MV, DD
Common Mustached Bat, <i>Pteronotus parnellii</i>	MV, EG
Lesser Mustached Bat, <i>P. personatus</i>	MV
Davy's Naked-backed Bat, <i>P. davyi</i>	MV
Big Naked-backed Bat, <i>P. gymnonotus</i>	DD
Riparian Myotis, <i>Myotis riparius</i>	LG
Black Myotis, <i>M. nigricans</i>	LG
Hairy-legged Myotis, <i>M. keaysi</i>	DD
Central American Yellow Bat, <i>Rhogeessa tumida</i>	LA, MB, EG
Argentine Brown Bat, <i>Eptesicus furinalis</i>	EQ, EG
Western Red Bat, <i>Lasiurus blossevillii</i>	EJ
Spix's Disk-winged Bat, <i>Thyroptera tricolor</i>	RB
Bonda Mastiff Bat, <i>Molossus bondae</i>	EG
Carnivores	
Jaguarundi, <i>Herpailurus jaguarondi</i>	EQ
Ocelot, <i>Leopardus pardalis</i>	EJ
Striped Hog-nosed Skunk, <i>Conepatus semistriatus</i>	EQ, EG
Hooded Skunk, <i>Mephitis macroura</i>	EG
Southern Spotted Skunk, <i>Spilogale angustifrons</i>	LA, EQ
Neotropical River Otter, <i>Lontra longicaudis</i>	RB
Northern Raccoon, <i>Procyon lotor</i>	MV
Kinkajou, <i>Potos flavus</i>	EQ, LG, EJ, DD
Bushy-tailed Olingo, <i>Bassaricyon gabbii</i>	EG, RB, EJ, DD
Gray Fox, <i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	EJ, DD
Monkeys	
Mantled Howler, <i>Alouatta palliata</i>	LA, EQ, EG, LG, RB,

Central American Spider Monkey, <i>Ateles geoffroyi</i>	LG, RB
White-faced Capuchin, <i>Cebus capucinus</i>	LG, RB
Rodents	
Variiegated Squirrel, <i>Sciurus variegatoides</i>	LA, MB, EQ, EJ
Richmond's Squirrel, <i>Sciurus richmondi</i>	EJ
Deppe's Squirrel, <i>Sciurus deppei</i>	EJ, DD
Mexican Hairy Porcupine <i>Sphiggurus mexicanus</i>	MV
Central American Agouti, <i>Dasyprocta punctata</i>	MB, EG, LG, RB, EJ
Paca, <i>Cuniculus paca</i>	RB
Armored Rat, <i>Hoplomys gymnurus</i>	RB
Tomes' Spiny Rat, <i>Proechimys semispinosus</i>	LG
Salvin's Spiny Pocket Mouse, <i>Liomys salvini</i>	EG
Forest Spiny Pocket Mouse, <i>Heteromys desmarestianus</i>	DD
Long-whiskered Rice Rat, <i>Transandinomys bolivaris</i>	RB
Dusky Rice Rat, <i>Melanomys caliginosus</i>	LG, RB
Alfaro's Rice Rat, <i>Handleyomys alfaro</i>	DD
Vesper Rat, <i>Nyctomys sumichrasti</i>	LA, EJ
Mexican Deer Mouse, <i>Peromyscus mexicanus</i>	EJ, DD
Slender Harvest Mouse, <i>Reithrodontomys gracilis</i>	EJ
House Mouse, <i>Mus musculus</i>	EJ
Rabbits	
Forest Rabbit, <i>Sylvilagus brasiliensis</i>	EJ
Sloths	
Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, <i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i>	EQ
Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth, <i>Bradypus variegatus</i>	LG

Additional Mammals seen on trip extension, Feb 17-19, 2015 (Jose and Mike only)

Mexican Funnel-eared Bat, *Natalus mexicanus*
Woolly Funnel-eared Bat, *Natalus lanatus*
Long-legged Bat, *Macrophyllum macrophyllum*
Little Mastiff Bat, *Molossus molossus*
Big Crested Mastiff Bat, *Promops centralis*

Report by **Fiona A. Reid** (www.fionareid.ca)

If you have read this far and are interested in a small-group customized trip to Nicaragua for mammals and/or herps, please contact me at [Fiona.reid7243 at gmail.com](mailto:Fiona.reid7243@gmail.com). I would be happy to help set up trips for 2-4 people, which would be led by Jose Gabriel. You can read what Jon Hall has to say about him on Jon's Nicaragua reports, and here is a note from **Paul Carter and Mike Richardson** based on this recent trip:

Jose Gabriel Martinez co-guided the main Nicaragua trip and organised/guided the two day extension. Jose's encyclopaedic knowledge of Nicaraguan wildlife, especially mammals, reptiles and amphibians, is complemented by an inherent ability to track, spot and, if need be, catch a wide range of animals including snakes and Water Opossums. Jose is co-author of a reptile guide to be published shortly.

A competent and careful driver, Jose also proved invaluable at sorting permits and organising access to private reserves. Throughout the trip he worked tirelessly making sure that our expectations were being met and often went the extra mile to ensure that we didn't miss any of our targets. Above all, Jose is fantastic company with a humble personality and great sense of humour. We have absolutely no reservations about recommending his services to others.