

Nicaragua Mammal Extravaganza – Extension 17-19 February, 2015

Michael Richardson
mike@richardsonwinch.plus.com

Following a fantastic two weeks mammal watching with Fiona Reid, Jose Gabriel Martinez and Paul Carter, I decided to add a couple more days to the end of the trip. With a phenomenal 87 mammals recorded over the previous thirteen days it was going to be difficult to add any more species. Fortunately Jose Gabriel Martinez was guiding me and he had a couple of ideas up his sleeve.

Feb 17, Laguna del Apoyo (LA) and Santa Teresa (ST)

After dropping Fiona and Paul off at the Best Western, Jose and I made a beeline back to Laguna del Apoyo where the trip had begun almost a fortnight ago. Our target was the Southern Spotted Skunk, an animal that had eluded me throughout the trip despite a number of sightings by others in the group.

Jose and Paul had seen three skunks at Laguna del Apoyo prior to Fiona and I joining them on the first evening. We had high hopes of a repeat performance as we entered the private land and began spotlighting around the small homestead and surrounding woodland. Things started off very slow, not helped by the loud music coming from a nearby house.

In over an hour we found both **Common** and **Virginia Opossum** along with a small colony of **Common Vampire Bats**, the latter emerging from an old well.



Common Vampire Bat (*Desmodus rotundus*)

After a couple more circuits of the property Jose skilfully spotted a **Mexican Porcupine** high up in a tree. The animal eventually showed very well as it moved to a more open branch. By now I had given up on the skunks and even Jose was beginning to worry. We checked the stone walls time and time again without so much as a rustle in the dry leaf litter.

Eventually Jose's persistence paid off when he found our target emerging from its den at the bottom of a small ravine. With **Southern Spotted Skunk** well and truly in the bag we called it a night. I don't know who was more relieved, me or Jose!

Our next port of call was Jose's father's house in the village of Santa Teresa. Luis, a friend of Jose, had netted some of the free-tailed bats that reside in the roof. Close inspection revealed two species namely **Big Crested Mastiff Bat** and **Little Mastiff Bat** – both new species for me.

It was then time for bed at Jose's house, but not before a delicious home cooked meal prepared by Jose's wife.



Big Crested Mastiff Bat (*Promops centralis*)

Feb 18, El Abuelo (EA) and Volcan Mombacho (VM)

An early start saw us on the road south closely following the shoreline of Lago Nicaragua. Near to the border with Costa Rica we curved southeast, entering a region with a relatively low population and some decent tracts of forest. In such a remote area we hoped to see some interesting mammals but we had to make do with a single **Variegated Squirrel** crossing the road.

We arrived at El Abuelo Private Reserve, the last few km's only negotiable by 4x4. After introducing ourselves to the forest guard we were shown a series of caves along the shore of the lake, two of which were even unknown to Jose. The first cave held good numbers of **Grey Sac-winged Bats** while the second was home to **Seba's Short-tailed Bats**, **Common Vampires** and some **Common Long-tongued Bats**.

The reason for our visit was a third cave located on a high cliff overlooking the lake. Here we found our target **Mexican Funnel-eared Bat** along with smaller numbers of **Woolly Funnel-eared Bats**. Further

exploration revealed more **Common Vampires**, a **Greater Spear-nosed Bat**, some **Seba's Short-tails** and to Jose's delight, another new species in the form of a single **Long-legged Bat**.



Long-legged Bat (*Macrophyllum macrophyllum*)
Taken by Jose Gabriel Martinez



Phyllostomus hastatus (centre), *Natalus Lanatus* (light),
Natalus mexicanus (orange/yellowish)
Taken by Jose Gabriel Martinez

While cutting away obstructing vegetation with his machete our guide disturbed a skunk which Jose and I only glimpsed briefly. We decided it was most likely a **Striped Hog-nosed**.

With **Mantled Howlers** calling from nearby trees we thanked our host and made the long drive north to Volcan Mombacho.

We arrived at the volcano late afternoon and drove the steep incline up to the visitor centre. Jose had already arranged our accommodation in the staff dormitory and after dropping off our gear we set over 20 Sherman traps along the trail. A researcher was already ringing birds in the reserve and it made sense to use his nets to capture bats. There were twelve nets to choose from in total and Jose decided to make use of them all.

As we took in the view overlooking one of the craters a troop of **White-faced Capuchins** called from the trees far below. Before long it was dark enough to check the nets which involved making a rough 30 minute circuit through the cloud forest. At this point the wind had greatly increased in strength and visibility was obscured by a mixture of dust and cloud.

Throughout the evening we netted a respectable number of bats considering the weather. Although none were new for the trip we captured five species namely **Toltec Fruit-eating Bat**, **Seba's Short-tailed Bat**, **Grey Short-tailed Bat**, **Heller's Broad-nosed Bat** and **Common Long-tongued Bat**.

Between net checks we hiked some trails and had great views of a **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth** blowing about in the tree tops. Also of note was finding *Bolitoglossa mombachoensis* –a small salamander endemic to Volcan Mombacho.

Feb 19, Volcan Mombacho (VM) and Volcan Masaya (MV)

The plan for today was an early morning hike on the Puma Trail. With the wind still howling and visibility almost zero the thought of such a long and strenuous walk up steep inclines did not appeal so instead we opted to check the Sherman traps. Nearly all were tripped but our joy turned to dismay when we realised they all contained some very familiar deer mice.

All was not lost as Jose suspected that not all the mice were the Mexican Deer Mice we had seen earlier in the trip. In fact we were in range of Naked-eared Deer Mouse, a near identical species that usually occurs at much lower elevations. Although Mexican Deer Mouse is found at high altitudes, Mombacho is not in their known range. In other words it was important that we measure the mice to determine the correct species.

Initial measurements suggest that we captured both **Mexican** and **Naked-eared Mice** although more work needs to be done. DNA was taken from a several samples and Jose plans to return to Mombacho to collect more specimens.

I spent the rest of the morning hiking down the steep entrance road seeing nothing of note. At a coffee shop in the plantation near the foot of the volcano we sampled the local produce in huge cups. Jose got talking to the staff who were happy to show us some **Great Fruit-eating Bats** in the surrounding trees. They also regularly see Nicaraguan Pocket Gophers around the place.



Volcan Masaya

After some lunch at a roadside restaurant we spent the afternoon at Volcan Masaya where we hiked around one of the craters. Although it was unlikely that we would add any new mammals to the list, we had a slim chance of spotting Coyote or White-tailed Deer from one of the many viewpoints. I've seen both species in the US many times before so it wasn't any great hardship to miss both targets. Even without any mammals it was an enjoyable way to spend my last daylight hours in Nicaragua, not least because of the beautiful scenery and excellent company. All too quickly it was time to check into the Best Western Hotel in Managua and say goodbye to Jose and Luis.

Mammal list Nicaragua Extension Feb 17-19, 2015

For code locations, see above

*new species for the trip

**to be confirmed

| | |
|--|--------|
| Common Opossum, <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i> | LA |
| Virginia Opossum, <i>D. Virginiana</i> | LA |
| Gray Sac-winged Bat, <i>Balantiopteryx plicata</i> | EA |
| Greater Spear-nosed Bat, <i>Phyllostomus hastatus</i> | EA |
| Toltec Fruit-eating Bat, <i>Artibeus toltecus</i> | VM |
| Great Fruit-eating Bat, <i>A. lituratus</i> | VM |
| Heller's Broad-nosed Bat, <i>Platyrrhinus helleri</i> | VM |
| Seba's Short-tailed Bat, <i>Carollia perspicillata</i> | EA, VM |
| Grey Short-tailed Bat, <i>C. subrufa</i> | VM |
| Common Long-tongued Bat, <i>Glossophaga soricina</i> | EA, VM |
| Common Vampire, <i>Desmodus rotundus</i> | LA, EA |
| Long-legged Bat, <i>Macrophyllum macrophyllum</i> * | EA |
| Mexican Funnel-eared Bat, <i>Natalus mexicanus</i> * | EA |
| Woolly Funnel-eared Bat, <i>N. Lanatus</i> * | EA |
| Little Mastiff Bat, <i>Molossus molossus</i> * | ST |
| Big Crested Mastiff Bat, <i>Promops centralis</i> * | ST |
| Striped Hog-nosed Skunk, <i>Conepatus semistriatus</i> | EA |
| Southern Spotted Skunk, <i>Spilogale angustifrons</i> | LA |
| Mantled Howler, <i>Alouatta palliate</i> | EA |
| White-faced Capuchin, <i>Cebus capucinus</i> | VM |
| Variiegated Squirrel, <i>Sciurus variegatoides</i> | EA |
| Mexican Hairy Porcupine <i>Sphiggurus mexicanus</i> | LA |
| Mexican Deer Mouse, <i>Peromyscus mexicanus</i> | VM |
| Naked-eared Deer Mouse, <i>P. gymnotis</i> ** | VM |
| Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth, <i>Choloepus hoffmanni</i> | VM |