

ISRAEL March 2014

In March 2014 I spent 2 weeks in Israel visiting both the north and the south. It was my first trip in this country. I found good informations on Mammalwatching, plus I thank Timo Marijnissen who gave me informations where he saw Arabian Oryx.

Here is a short report of the places and species seen.

EIN GEDI

The reserve was closed because of flooding. I nevertheless saw 2 target species:

-Nubian Ibexes: 7 females at the Field School, 6 males near the entrance of the reserve.

-Rock hyrax: a lot.

-Indian porcupine:1 quill in the campsite.

MIZPE SHALEM

This reserve in the West Bank, 12 km north of Ein Gedi is the place to visit if you want to see and merit ibex after hiking and without seeing any tourist. I saw only 2 males.

EIN SHAHAK

This place is a few kilometers south west of Gidron Field School near Hazeva. This is the place where Timo Marijnissen saw Arabian Oryx. I didn't see any but several persons told me they are very shy and to be there very early (I tried in the evening and the following morning by 5h30). Two soldiers told me they saw a group near Sappir (circa 10km south). I didn't have time to go there. Maybe next time. I got 5 Dorcas gazelles, 1 Red fox and 1 Hare (species???).

HAI BAR YOTVATA

This a fenced area where they breed Arabian oryx, Onager, Addax, Scimitar horned Oryx and Somali Wild Ass. I saw all this species but was mainly interested to see the last one. I also saw a Desert Hedgehog rescued from Yotvata supermarket where it entered, and twice a Red fox (by day and night) east of Yotvata..

ACCACIA GAZELLE RESERVE

This place is just in front of the latter one, on the other side of Road 90. It is now fenced. The Accacia gazelle was considered a subspecies of Mountain gazelle, but of course it is now split as a new species. I saw a few of them each time I went there. But you are not allowed to drive or even walk around the reserve. This is the only place where now exist this gazelle. Dorcas gazelles were far more common inside but also outside along Road 90 on the way to Eilat.

EILAT MOUNTAIN

1 Golden Spiny Mouse.

MAKHTESH RAMON

As I approached Mizpe Ramon from the south I saw a lot of droppings of “asses”, as they are no asses I understood they were those of Onagers. I stopped at Be’erot camp, where you can sleep inside the MAKHTESH RAMON. Late afternoon and the following morning I looked hard for Onagers, but didn’t see any although I found a lot of evidence of them. At the camp they told me they are very few. I got 3 Dorcas gazelles, 8 Nubian Ibex and droppings of Hyrax.

MIZPE RAMON

Ibex are easy to see as they come in the town, grazing the lawns. I saw 5 males and 7 females. As I saw there was a Field School, I asked informations where to see Onagers and was told to look along Road 171 and specially near Borot in HAR HANEDEV RESERVE, which is close to the Egyptians border.

HAR HANEDEV RESERVE

Late afternoon I visited the place and saw really a lot of droppings of Onagers. I met an Israeli guide who told me it was the worst time to see them as the females were pregnant and stay far from the road. I nevertheless saw one just before night. The following morning I was again along this road by 5h30 and saw one at a different place. But they are difficult to spot when they are on the rocky slopes as they blend very well. I also got Red fox and 2 Dorcas gazelles.

NIZZANA (near Egyptian border or road 211)

The only mammal I saw was a very confident Golden Jackal. But I found quills of Indian Crested Porcupines.

BET SHE’AN

Dead: 1 Red fox and several White-breasted Hedgehogs.

YEHUDIYA NATURE RESERVE

One Indian porcupine in the campsite. Call of Golden Jackal by night. 14 Mountain gazelles around.

HULA VALLEY

6 Wild boars.

JORDAN PARK

1 Egyptian mongoose along the Jordan river and calls of Golden Jackal by night.

GOLAN SLOPES RESERVE

40+ Mountain gazelles, a lot of Rock hyraxes, 3 red foxes.

HULA AND AGAMON RESERVES

Disappointing places with a lot of noisy tourists. Just 1 Golden Jackal and 1 Wild boar. I don't mention the "domestic" Buffalos and the Coypus. No Jungle cat.

GAMLA RESERVE

Rock hyraxes (1 caught by a Bonelli's eagle), call of Golden Jackal by night and several Mountain gazelles.

RIVER ALEXANDER PARK (south HADERA)

I went there to see the Soft shell turtles. I also saw Coypu and a European Badger's den.

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