

Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP ~ August 2024 Trip Report

Lodgepole Chipmunk	45
Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	17
California Ground Squirrel	3
Humboldt's Flying Squirrel	5
Douglas' Squirrel	5
Western Gray Squirrel	2
Big-eared Woodrat	1
Montane Vole	1
Deer Mouse	16
Yellow-bellied Marmot	7
<i>Myotis/Bat Sp.</i>	50+
Western Mastiff Bat	10
Gray Fox	1
Mule Deer	10



Day 1 (8/11)

Despite an 11-hour drive beginning about two hours before sunrise, we were able to pick up a couple of mammals here and there on the way. Upon crossing into California on our way from Bend, OR, we observed a sudden influx of GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRRELS. They were most notably present at the Grass Lake rest stop just northeast of Weed, CA, but we also encountered one or two by simply pulling off of Hwy 97 en route. While the rest of the day's light was spent driving and stopping occasionally for birds, the rest of the day was not without mammal highlights. Upon arriving at Sequoia NP, we were greeted by the audible clicks of echolocating WESTERN MASTIFF BAT. This species, as well as the Spotted Bat, are two of the few

bat species we can regularly hear well with the human ear. The audible Western Flycatcher-like high frequency “chip” characteristic of Western Mastiff Bat was heard periodically throughout the following day and a half while we were in the area. After listening for bats and admiring the Perseids meteor shower, we continued down to a potential camping spot. Though we were hoping for more opportunities to detect bat species, upon arrival we were greeted by the familiar sound of scratching on tree trunks typical of flying squirrels. It was only a matter of minutes before we were able to illuminate a family of 5-6 HUMBOLDT’S FLYING SQUIRREL. While looks were always brief, every now and then we’d get a five-second look at one climbing its way up a tree trunk. Also of note, the presumed juveniles were making an audible high-frequency whining sound which made locating these individuals a bit easier. After watching for 10 or so minutes with no photos to show, we called it a night at midnight and headed to bed.

Day 2 (8/12)

After a short night with the scratching of flying squirrels carrying over into the early morning, our second day started promptly at 6:30. While waiting for Louis to come by in the morning, I listened closely to the morning chorus of calling Western Tanagers and chattering DOUGLAS’ SQUIRRELS. Though it was considerably light by the time 6:17 rolled around, this did not stop a bat from continuing to hunt high over the car. While I didn’t take a close look at this bat, I’ll note that it was echolocating at a range of 42-45 kHz. Shortly after, Louis and I headed down into a slightly lower-elevation forest to target Gray Fox. Despite an hour and a half of searching, the only mammals we came up with were a couple Douglas’ Squirrels, a handful of LODGEPOLE CHIPMUNK, and one WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL.



The rest of the day up until the evening was spent targeting various bird species as well as planning out locations to target certain snake species. Considering our options, we decided that exploring the bottom of King's Canyon was the best decision. While a few birds of interest were noted in the canyon as well as a Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, we were unsuccessful in locating any mammals of interest apart from a GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL on the way in, and a CALIFORNIA GROUND SQUIRREL at the bottom. As the sun set and darkness began to set in, we began our plans of night cruising the road through the bottom of the canyon for more potential snakes. With a few stops here and there, we picked up two DEER MOUSE and at least three species of bat. Notes for bats:

Small Myotis sp, kHz 46-48 peaking at 56. Large myotis sp. kHz 23-26 peaking at 34. At least 3 species present, one or two potential Hoary Bat. A handful of presumed Canyon or Yuma Myotis present. Peak frequency we picked up was 62-65 kHz. Roads end, Kings Canyon (8/12).



Golden-mantled Ground-Squirrel

Despite a thorough drive through the bottom of the canyon, we were unsuccessful in finding any of our mammal or snake targets. It wasn't until 15 or so minutes into our ascent out of the canyon that all of us got brief but good views of a GRAY FOX running

across the road. Super stoked about getting our #1 mammal target for the park, our excitement continued when we finally found our first night cruised snake of the trip: another Northern Pacific Rattlesnake (shown below)! At that, we headed back to where we slept the previous night and fell asleep once again to the sounds of flying squirrels.



Day 3 (8/13)

The morning started the same as the previous morning minus the sound of flying squirrels. It appears that they were less active the night before than the night we arrived. The first destination of the day was a spot near Big Meadows in an attempt to target American Goshawks. Heading out half an hour after sunrise, two MULE DEER crossing the road marked the first mammal of the day. Not too many mammals of note were observed between the drive and the turnaround point of the trail, but it was fun spending time with ~20 Lodgepole Chipmunks and a couple more Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels along the trail. On the way back down to the car, two young YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT marked the first and only expected marmot species of the trip. After a long lunch and some discussion of the plans for the evening, we headed out towards Giant Forest around 3 pm. Despite a thorough search via the complex trail system by the Crescent Meadow parking lot, we were only successful in locating a few Yellow-bellied Marmots, Mule Deer, and many Lodgepole Chipmunks. This area is supposedly frequented by a handful of Black Bears which we were unsuccessful in locating. While the rest of the day was focused on targeting a few select bird species, once night fell we were back out on the roads night cruising for snakes and mammals. Though not too many notable mammals were seen before sunset, good views of a MONTANE VOLE were had after night had fallen. Despite an hour or two of cruising

roads just before bed, no snakes were found and hardly more than two species of mammal were encountered. We were pleasantly surprised to come across one of these species while driving Drive 254. As we made our way down the road, Louis and I simultaneously spotted a woodrat species disappearing into a black drainage pipe. Both of us got great views of the BIG-EARED WOODRAT while lying on our stomachs looking down the drainpipe. At this point, fully exhausted from a long day, we made our way back and returned to our parking spot for the third and final night.



Big-eared Woodrat

Good birding and mammal-watching,
Alex Sowers