

Trip report - Belize & Mexico 2025

We visited Mexico, Belize and Guatemala for a month in Feb 2025 but only dedicated three days to serious mammal watching, at Lamanai Outpost Lodge in Belize. Over the month we saw **14 species** (12 at Lamanai) including **9 lifers** and the most disappointing sighting of a **Tayra** imaginable.



Yucatan black howler visiting Lamanai Lodge

Lamanai Outpost Lodge

This is a jungle lodge with a focus on wildlife activities, but very much geared to general tourists. We chose to go with the tourist package including 6 activities, as it meant we'd have a local guide relatively cheap, but we ended up arranging two specific private activities anyway: it's a popular lodge, fully booked, and a night walk with six other random tourists isn't likely to be very successful. We also let them know about our special interest in mammals, but maybe needed to emphasise this more as they didn't share anything much useful with us.

On a night spotlighting boat tour we saw **3 Mexican porcupines** in the trees, at least **2 Greater Fishing Bats** in flight, and **3 Northern Ghost Bats** in flight. We also saw **5 Proboscis bats** on a tree trunk by the water, and the following morning were shown a colony of 20+ on a tree trunk right by the lodge's boat dock.

The following night we took a private boat out again, targeting manatees and otters, but all we saw were **3 Kinkajous** in the trees and several more Northern Ghost Bats. Talking to the

guides, in February the water is probably too shallow for the manatees (go earlier in the season) but ironically probably too deep for otters, who can fish in the deep bankside vegetation until the true dry season.

Visiting the Lamanai Mayan ruins we found at least two groups of **Yucatan black howler** monkeys, and a group of **Yucatan spider monkeys** which are apparently seldom seen here. Another lone black howler came through the lodge one morning. There were **White-nosed coatis** foraging at the ruins too, and we saw both **Yucatan squirrels** and **Deppe's squirrel** here (distinguished by our guide by Deppe's being a little smaller and with noticeable brown colouration on the side).



Yucatan squirrel in the palms

We went for a private night walk and saw absolutely zero eye-shine (apart from a token nightjar) over more than 90 minutes; our guide was good enough to say that this level of nothing was very rare; they often find opossum or pygmy opossum at least. At the lodge we saw a couple of **Central American agoutis** around, as well as more squirrels.

And then at breakfast next morning the couple at the table overlooking the bird feeders were saying something about “oh yes, I see it, same one as before” and “look, there it goes”. We assumed a bird, until one of them added “it seems a bit bigger than the other tayra...”

Tayra?! We leapt up, abandoned breakfast, and tip-toe/ran in the direction the couple indicated it had gone. I saw its tail disappear into banana leaves, Maureen missed it by a second. Nothing else found here has a long, bushy, tapering black tail, so I think it counts as a sighting... barely. But do you know how that couple knew it was a tayra? “Oh, we saw it at lunch here yesterday as well, and our guide told us about it.” ARGH!

We camped out in front of the feeders for an entire day, hoping for a return visit, but as usual with mammal watching: a random tourist see it two days in a row at different times when they just happen to be there for breakfast/lunch, and then the next day it doesn't show up at all!

Other locations

We saw a couple of groups of Yucatan black howlers at the Palenque Mayan ruins in Chiapas, also another Deppe's squirrel, white-nosed coatis and agouti. We also found a small group of bats roosting in a ruin, identified as **Common big-eared bat** by Juan Cruzado via mammalwatching.com.

We also saw several coatis in the car park area of Tikal Mayan ruins in Guatemala, and several agoutis in the morning trails around the ruins. We saw more Yucatan spider monkeys at various times of day right around the main ruins of Tikal. We also found a different species of bat roosting in one of the ruins, the well-named Bat Palace, most likely **Lesser dog-like bat** based on size (thanks again Juan).



Spider monkey on the ruins of Tikal

At the smaller **Chacchoben Mayan ruins** in Quintana Roo we found two groups of spider monkeys and quite a few agoutis in the morning. These and other ruins are often in sizeable areas of jungle, but of course mostly you can't enter until 8am and must leave well before sunset.

We spent a few days on Caye Caulker: there's a fair chance of manatees if you take any of the half-day snorkelling trips out (they're well worth it for other sea life too), rising to a very good chance of manatees if you take a full-day trip. We did a half-day but got unlucky.

Finally, some of the cenotes in Quintana Roo have bats in the cave parts. Nohoch Nah Chich was the most amazing cenote (we visited 8, so have some insight!), an amazing snorkelling tour, and you'll see lots of **Jamaican fruit bats** hanging from the roof. Fairly sure we also saw these flying around the lodge at Lamanai, but can't be certain.



Jamaican fruit bats at Nohoch Nah Chich cenote