

New England notes, pt. 1

10/8-10/9/17

Venkat Sankar (vnsankar123@gmail.com)

Over the long weekend, I visited a couple of sites in the Boston area primarily to try and find a few new species and scout some places for exploration during future free time. As is often the case in the Eastern US, it wasn't overly successful with only 10 or so species and no rarities to speak of, but a few nice sightings. Most of what I found is only of local interest, but for anyone in the area I figure some of this info should be worth noting.

On the night of 10/8, I spent about 2 hours spotlighting in and near Petersham State Forest (aka "Harvard Forest") near Petersham, MA. While approaching the site, I had a superb sighting of a **North American Porcupine** waddling along the road verge at touching distance near the intersection of Tom Swamp Rd and New Athol Rd. I made several passes up and down Tom Swamp Road and also drove Nelson Road up to "Petersham Pump" (42.5284, -72.2099), after which point spotlighting is illegal. The forest was alive with **Southern Flying Squirrels** and I must have heard more than 40; I saw 2 with no effort. **White-footed Mice** were also abundant and I stopped counting after 15. Due to the plentiful prey, Barred Owls were around too and the night air was filled with their wonderful calls. I was also surprised to get a close look at a *Myotis* while spotlighting near a small brook, which would either be Little Brown Myotis or Northern Long-eared Myotis (these were the only two *Myotis* recorded in intensive recent surveys here).

I was disappointed to miss Long-tailed Weasel (common in the forest), and the swampy area near (42.5118, -72.2117) should be good for shrews. This is one of the better sites in MA for Fisher... I didn't have time to explore nearby Quabbin Reservoir; it's reportedly quite good for mammals, with Bobcat, Eastern Coyote, American Mink, Northern River Otter, Moose, Snowshoe Hare, and American Beaver all regularly seen too (see this [link](#)).

It rained most of the next day, so I did little concerted mammal watching. I visited Chatham Fish Pier (41.688437, -69.951063) in Cape Cod in the afternoon, where **Grey Seals** are very easy to see, especially between Oct-Apr. If you want to see more, apparently nearby Lighthouse Beach is a very good place. The weather was humid and rainy so I didn't see much else, save for a couple of **Eastern Gray Squirrels** and an **American Mink** spotted briefly swimming in a roadside pond.

I then entered Rhode Island and after dinner went to the area near Trustom Pond NWR, probably my favorite wildlife viewing site in the Boston area, as the rain stopped (around 9 PM). I was hoping for a shrew or mole above ground following the rain so I did a bit of spotlighting on foot just outside the entrance of the reserve along Matunuck Schoolhouse Road. I found 2 **Meadow Jumping Mice** and what may have been a Woodland Jumping Mouse (I think I saw the white-tipped tail, but it was a brief view and the habitat seems wrong) and heard 2 **Southern Flying Squirrels**. I also saw 1 almost-certain **New England Cottontail** in the area and a couple of presumed **Eastern Cottontails** a bit further away from the reserve. No Southern Bog Lemmings, which were abundant when I was here last summer, or any voles. I then drove Moonstone Beach Road, hoping for Bobcat (a sighting of one+2 kittens was reported earlier in the week) but only saw a **Meadow Jumping Mouse**, 2 **White-footed Mice**, and lots of **White-tailed Deer**.