

# MEXICO - YUCATAN

20 July – 26 July 2021

## Introduction

My first mammalwatching trip since the covid-madness started last year.

In a hard time to travel I chose Mexico mainly for its relaxed travel restrictions but also a lot of lifers for me and with a good combination with some beach life as well.

Also, Yucatan seems as good (or bad) as other places in search for the elusive Margay cat. Therefore I contacted biologist Juan Cruzado Cortez ([juancruzado@outlook.com](mailto:juancruzado@outlook.com)) often hired on this forum, and he recommended me a couple of places to visit.

I ended up with a 6 nights tour with three different places - two nights each -. Calakmul, Tres garantias and Amazili reserve close to Valladolid.

Juan couldn't join me on this, instead I had Ismael Arellano ([ichitours@gmail.com](mailto:ichitours@gmail.com)) as a guide. He had joined Juan on previous mammalwatching tours and knew the areas very well. Also very willing to put in as many hours as I wanted. Both day and night. In the end we did not sleep much and when we did we did it for example one night in terrible humid conditions inside our car...

We did spotlighting every night. All nights long. Often until the sun went up again. We used small roads inside the reserves for spotlighting from the car and also went to some shorter hikes. It was incredible humid and hot this time of year in Yucatan! I was more than once close to leave the life on earth...

In **Calakmul** you can do spotlighting the first 20km how much you want. You just pay entrance at the gate and then you can do whatever you want. Then there is another gate for the rest 45km and this is where the problem begins... It's not allowed to go there by night. But after a lot of work we finally got permission for spotlighting here if we were joined by another biologist who did some research for frogs in the area. Ironically the first 20km was far better for us with sightings though... so in the end it was not worth all the hassle to get this permission.

**Tres garantias** close to Belize border has some very nice forests as well and after breaking the locks like Mexican mafiosos at one gate and got the key to another after searching for it in half of Mexico, we got access to some very nice roads for spotlighting.

**Amazili reserve** close to Valladolid is a small reserve but with frequent sightings of Margay on Ismaels and Juans camera traps. We did spotlighting along the small road inside the reserve and also visited some caves and cenotes close by in search for mammals.



Long story short. We didn't see any Margay despite many, many hours spotlighting. I still stand at 25 feline species. But we did see another 24 species of mammals (21 lifers) in Yucatan and below is their story...



*Nice road in Tres garantias*



### My species list

1. **Gray fox** --- The most abundant species we saw. Both day and night in all three locations. 7-8 individuals in total.



2. **Kinkajou** --- (lifer) Fantastic sighting at one of the cenotes outside Valladolid, late evening just before the dark. Hard work and much persuasion to get permission to get inside the area after dark but it was all worth it.





**3. Guatemalan howler --- (lifer)** Seen in Calakmul early morning. A group of 5-6 individuals. Also seen when spotlighting in the same area. Seems easy and reliable here.



**4. Geoffroy's spider monkey --- (lifer)** Seen in Calakmul early morning in the same area as the Howlers. Small group passed by. Also seen when spotlighting in Tres garantias where they are abundant.





5. **Gray four eyed opossum --- (lifer)** One seen in Calakmul and possible one in Tres garantias.



6. **Common opossum ---** A couple Seen in the cenotes outside Valladolid.



**7. Eastern cottontail --- (lifer)** One seen in Calakmul. He refused to leave the road and probably still are on it...



**8. Yucatan squirrel --- (lifer)** Two individuals seen. One in Calakmul and one crossing the road somewhere on Yucatan. Endemic to the Yucatan peninsula.





9. **Big-eared climbing rat (*Ototylomys phyllotis*)** --- **(lifer)** Nice photo isn't it? Hiding in a cage with chicken at one of the cenotes outside Valladolid.



10. **Gaumer's spiny pocket mice (*Heteromys gaumeri*)** --- **(lifer)** This mouse runs back and forth along the road at Calakmul. Endemic to the Yucatan peninsula.



11. Greater sac-winged bat (*Saccopteryx bilineata*) --- (lifer) A couple of them day roosting at our cabins where we stayed for the night in Tres garantias.



12. Jamaican fruit bat (*Artibeus jamaicensis*) --- (lifer) Seen inside reserve in Tres garantias where several of them took a rest inside a newly built cabin.





- 13. Common big-eared bat (*Micronycteris microtis*) --- (lifer)** One seen inside a limestone cave outside Valladolid. Amongst a big group of Cozumelan golden bats.



- 14. Cozumelan golden bat (*Mimon cozumelae*) --- (lifer)** Around 20 individuals found in a limestone cave outside Valladolid.



**15. Dobson's lesser mustached bat (*Pteronotus psilotis*) --- (lifer)** At the so called "bat volcano" in Calakmul where around 2 million bats take to the air every evening.

**16. Broad-eared bat (*Nyctinomops laticaudatus*) --- (lifer)** At the so called "bat volcano" in Calakmul.

**17. Mesoamerican mustached bat (*Pteronotus mesoamericanus*) --- (lifer)** At the so called "bat volcano in Calakmul.

**18. Mexican greater funnel-eared bat (*Natalus mexicanus*) --- (lifer)** At the so called "bat volcano in Calakmul.



*At least four very common species seen at the "bat volcano" in Calakmul. Bats everywhere...*

**19. Central American agouti --- (lifer)** One very brief sighting in Tres garantias. Quickly disappear from the road when we approached.

**20. Tayra --- (lifer)** A great sighting in Calakmul early morning around 5km from the ruins where one crossed the road. Yucatan subspecies has a very pale head and is really a beautiful mammal. A great lifer for me but unfortunately no photos.

**21. Baird's tapir --- (lifer)** Another great sighting in Calakmul. Tapir is very rare here and seldom seen. This was a lifer for both me and my guide. We heard some movements and cracking close to the road when spotlighting at night. We stopped and went out on foot and found a Tapir walking away along a dry riverbed inside the forest. At km18 along the Calakmul road.

**22. Collared peccary --- (lifer)** Two individuals quickly crossed the road in Tres garantias. Close to the entry gate.

**23. Virginia opossum ---** If we believe that the difference between Virginia and Common opossum is the blackish tail then we saw a couple of them crossing the road somewhere in Yucatan peninsula.

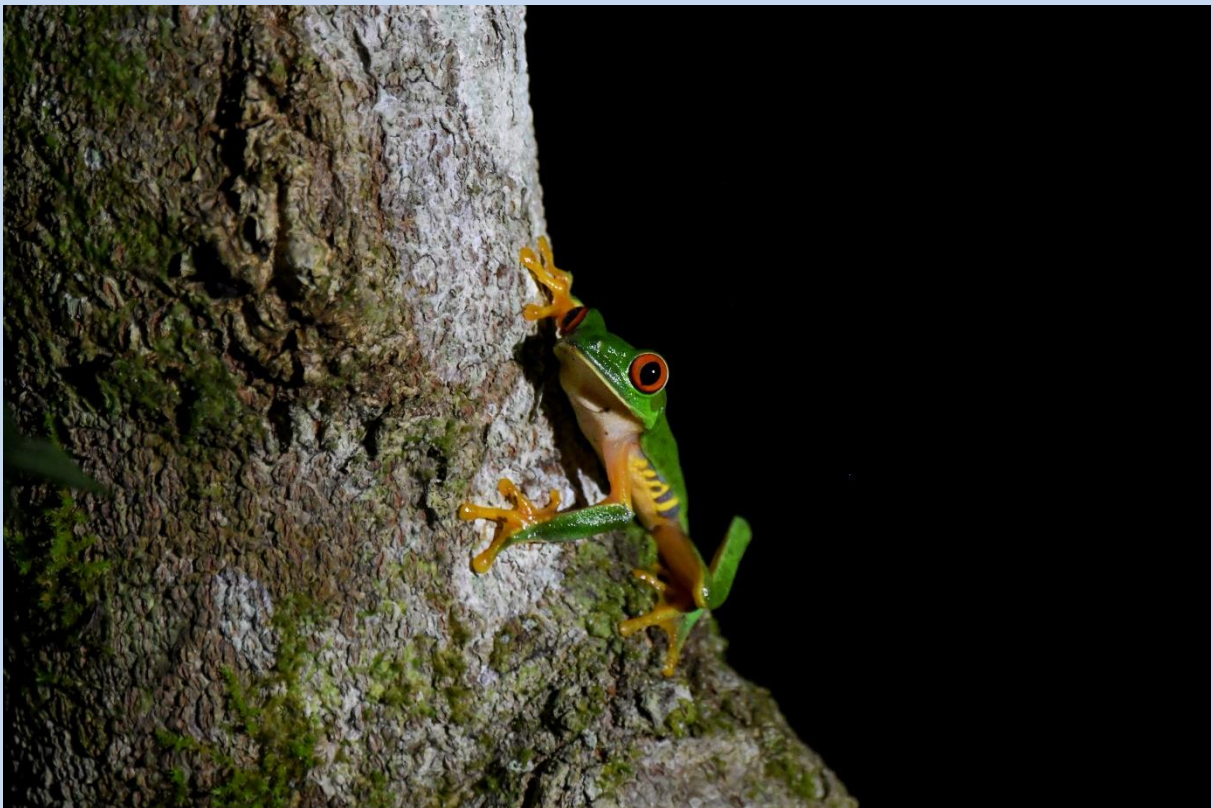
**24. White nosed coati --- (lifer)** Supposed to be one of the easiest mammals in this area but we struggle alot with them. My guide saw one at a cenote in the early evening. I missed it but did see one very quickly running down a tree on our way to the limestone cave outside Valladolid.



## Some other cool creatures



*Terrestrial snail sucker (Tropidodipsas sartorii)*



*Red-eyed tree frog*



## Stuff I missed

Of course the Margay cat was a noticeable miss. But we did our best with “tons” of spotlighting and long hours in what seemed like a very good habitat.

Another one we looked for but didn't see was the Yucatan brown brocket deer. Rarely seen because big hunting pressure.

White tailed deer was seen in Calakmul during our stay by other biologists but we didn't see any.

Nine banded armadillo would have been a lifer for me but no living animals seen. Only three roadkills...

Puma, Ocelot and Jaguar is seen every now and then in Calakmul.



*One of the cenotes who is scattered in northern Yucatan peninsula*





*I ended my time in Mexico with a couple of days on the beach.*

Thanx alot to my guide Ismael Arellano and to Juan Cruzado for helping me to get in touch with him and also with all the help in identifying the bats and rodents.

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