

**2018 TRIP: ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO and a few days in CALIFORNIA and
TEXAS (September/October) 2018**

After a trip in 2017 in California and Arizona, I returned this year in the USA visiting mainly Arizona and New Mexico, with just a few days spent in California and Texas. I spent a month there in September/October .

I arrived in Los Angeles and immediately rushed away from the crowds and huge traffic, arriving in the evening close to Phoenix at the border of Sonora National Monument where I camped.

SONORA NATIONAL MONUMENT (ARIZONA)

Early morning I began to look for **Round Tailed Ground Squirrel** west of Mobile along Road 238. I saw badly one running, plus 1 **Black Tailed Jackrabbit**, 1 **Desert Cottontail** and 1 **Harris's Antelope Squirrel**, but the sightings of the squirrels were poor and I kept on along this road to a more open place. I found what I wanted a few km west of Maricopa: an open sandy place without bushes and I easily saw **11 Round Tailed Ground Squirrels**. They were quite shy but I was able to approach them correctly by regularly walking slowly and sitting for a while. Then I drove to Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.

BUENOS AIRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (ARIZONA)

I saw 3 **Antelope Jackrabbits**, **Mule Deers**, 1 **Coyote**, 1 **Bobcat** (this one by daylight) and 8 **Pronghorns**. Concerning this last species I mentioned in 2017 I had seen there the Sonoran race because Vladimir Dinets wrote they are of this subspecies. But in fact these Pronghorns are animals introduced from Texas (it is writied at different places at this place and a ranger confirmed me that, telling me that this subspecies is in **Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge**).

MADERA CANYON (ARIZONA)

By daylight I saw **Rock Squirrels** and **Arizona Grey Squirrels**, and by night **Eastern Cottontail**, **Mexican Long-tongued Bats** (at the feeders) and thanks to the owner of Santa Rita Lodge 2 or 3 **Ringtails** feeding on fruits of a kind of cypress inside the property. West of the Canyon I got 1 **Harris's Antelope Squirrel**.

TUCSON EAST ARIZONA)

1 **Collared Peccary**.

PORTAL-CAVE CREEK CANYON AND THE CHIRICAHUA MOUNTAINS (ARIZONA)

As in 2017 I loved this quiet place. I explored the canyon and the road up to Rustler Park seeing very little by day (**Coue's White Tailed Deers**, **Rock Squirrels** and 1 **Mexican Fox Squirrel**, the last one close to the Visitor Center), the first night 2 **Hog Nosed Skunks** (1 between the Research Station and Rustler Park and 1 alongside the road close to Idlewood Campground just at my feet) and 1 white morph of **Hooded Skunk** in the Canyon, the second night 1 **Western Spotted Skunk** above the

Research Station. During 2 nights I also got **Northern Raccoons** and **Eastern Cottontail**. At the feeders of Cave Creek Ranch I saw 2 **Cliffs Chipmunk** and **Striped Skunks of the Arizona morph** (1 at 8am and 5 at 5pm) but I was not enough patient to spend a day sitting to wait for the regular **White Nosed Coatis**. East of **Portal** I got **Merriam's**, **Banner-Tailed** and **Ord's Kangaroo Rats**. Early morning I also saw 2 **Botta's Pocket Gophers** on the ground of the Research Station.

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ANIMAS (NEW MEXICO)

I went 3 times to Animas Valley. The first evening as I was driving south I got a bad puncture and had to return to Animas village. The second night I came back and drove the areas where Jon Hall saw the **White Sided Jackrabbits**. I didn't dare to use my spotlight because of the border patrols and saw badly 1 Jackrabbit that disappeared too fast in the long grass. I saw also 2 **Kit Fox** close to a rabbit just killed on the road. When I was back in Animas village I had 5 border patrol cars following me. I decided to stop and explain what I was doing. Two of them were very interested of that, telling me it was not a problem to spotlight in this area providing they know what you are doing and when. Strong of that I decided to come back the day after.

On my last evening, just south of Animas I finally saw my 2 first **Spotted Ground Squirrels** that eluded me during 5 days in Portal and Animas. Then again I drove like the day before the area south of mile 31. Further south I reached the area with tall grass, which is the right habitat of **White Sided Jackrabbit**, and that specially at the "end" of the valley. I saw twice Jackrabbits: once 2 animals together not enough cooperative; the second time it was a **White Sided Jackrabbits**. It was on the gravel road. I saw perfectly the white on the sides and the thigh, but was convinced it was one while seeing the black spot at the inner tip of the ears and the white tip (and far more than the tip) of the back of the ears. This animal is on the way to extinction in the USA. I also saw 30+ **Pronghorns**, **Mule Deers** and 1 **Striped Skunk**.

Closer to Animas I got **Black Tailed Jackrabbits**, 1 **Banner Tailed Kangaroo Rat**, **Desert Cottontail** and 1 **Southern Plains Woodrat**..

West of Animas I found a black morph of **Hooded Skunk**: quite shy I ran after and had close sighting when it took refuge under a rock and even sprayed.

CARLSBAD CAVERNS (NEW MEXICO)

By day I got **Rock Squirrels** plus 35 **Aoudads**. One night I stayed to the emergence of **Mexican Free Tailed Bats**. Three evenings I waited late that all tourists had left the area and drove several times the **access** road without spotlighting as a ranger told me it was forbidden. It was quite disappointing with just a **Striped Skunk**, a **Coyote** and 2 **Gray Foxes**, and outside the park **Ord's Kangaroo Rat**.

CARLSBAD CITY (NEW MEXICO)

12 **Rio Grande Ground Squirrels** and 1 **Eastern Fox Squirrel**, plus **Rock Squirrels**, all in **Matin Luther King Park**.

GUADALUPE NATIONAL FOREST (NEW MEXICO AND TEXAS)

1 **Striped Skunk**, **Mule Deers**. The road to **Sitting Bull Falls** mentioned s good for spotlighting is closed by night (last entrance at 5h30pm, last exit at 6pm and first entry at 8 or 8h30). Not worthwhile the detour.

GUADALUPE NATIONAL PARK (TEXAS)

I walked the Bowl where there is normally a small population of **Robust Cottontail** and a lot of **Gray Footed Chipmunks**. I didn't expect to see the Cottontail by day, but I even didn't see 1 Chipmunk (maybe because it was the middle of the day) and saw only **Mule Deers** and 2 Aoudads.

WHITE SANDS NATIONAL MONUMENT (NEW MEXICO)

I unfortunately didn't see anything being there in the middle of the day. Apparently the **Gemsboks** are quite rare now, being translocated outside of the Monument.

SUN SPOT IN SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS (NEW MEXICO)

I saw 5 **Gray Footed Chipmunks** where Jon Hall saw them, plus 2 **Fremont's Red Squirrels**.

ROSWELL (NEW MEXICO)

2 **Rio Grande Ground Squirrels** in a park.

SPRINGER, CLAYTON AND THE KIOWA NATIONAL GRASSLANDS (NEW MEXICO)

Following the steps of Steve Morgan I visited this area to find a Swift Fox. But the roads are very disturbed and I never waited midnight to get them quiet. So by night I concentrated on the gravel roads near Mills Canyon, C46 north of Road 412 east Springer (the last place with a lot of Black Tailed Jack rabbits otherwise surprisingly absent in this area), gravel roads west Springer and north Road 412, roads 406 and 411 north Clayton. **Coyotes** and **Pronghorns** were common. I saw also 2 **Striped Skunks**, 2 **Northern Raccoons**, 1 **American Badger** and **Mule Deers**, plus a **Swift Fox** at close quarters west of Clayton, many **Ord's Kangaroo Rats** and a few **Pocket Mice**.

There are many **Black Tailed Prairie Dogs** colonies (specially west of Springer). At Mills Canyon I saw also **Rock Squirrels** and 2 **Chipmunks** (apparently **Least**) and 2 **Deers** (apparently **White Tailed**) but the area was very disturbed with a camping full of hunters.

But even with a lot of efforts I never found a **Thirteen Lined Ground Squirrels**: were they already hibernating ?

SANDIA CREST IN CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST (NEW MEXICO)

3 **Colorado Chipmunks**, 1 **Least Chipmunk**, 3 **Fremont's Pine Squirrels**, 1 **Striped Skunk**, 2 **Albert's Squirrels**, 1 **Pocket Gopher** at the top, probably **Botta's** but with a black line behind the eyes, but no rabbit or Snowshoe Hare by night.

At the base of the mountain there were **Eastern Cottontails**.

WALNUT CANYON (ARIZONA)

3 **Gray Collared Chipmunks**, 1 **Rock Squirrel**, plus several dead **American Porcupines** in the area.

SELIGMAN (ARIZONA)

It was very cold after a night with snow in Flagstaff. I spotlighted a little in the evening without too much conviction. Again the road is very disturbed in the evening. I saw an **American Badger**, a

Coyote and Ord's Kangaroo Rats. If I had not seen **Black Footed Ferret** last year I would have spotlighted the full night, specially after midnight.

CARRIZO NATIONAL MONUMENT (CALIFORNIA)

Carrizo was again a great place with 14 **Kit Fox** in 2 hours, several **Black-Tailed Jackrabbits**, 3 **Coyotes**, a lot of **Hermann's Kangaroo Rats**, at least 2 **Giant** and 2 **Fresno** ones and 20 **Nelson's Antelope Squirrels** (also 1 near Taft)..

TULE ELK STATE PARK (CALIFORNIA)

At least 30 **Tule Elks** in a fenced area definitely not worthwhile to visit. I found also a dead **Red Fox** just east of Maricopa.

LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST close to CARRIZO (CALIFORNIA)

1 **Merriam's Chipmunk**, **California Ground Squirrels**, a **Gray Fox** and a **Californian Condor**.

MORRO BAY (CALIFORNIA)

1 male **California Sea Lion**, 13 **Sea Otters** and **California Ground Squirrels**.

SAN SIMEON (CALIFORNIA)

3 **Humpback Whales**, 30 **Harbor Seals**, 800 **Northern Elephant Seals** and **California Ground Squirrels**.

NACIMIENTO FERGUSON ROAD IN LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST

8 **Merriam's Chipmunk** (climbing at more than 10m in trees), 3 **Western Gray Squirrels** and 1 **Brush Rabbit** along the road to Cone Peak.

MONTEREY (CALIFORNIA)

The most disappointing part of my trip. Last year I saw 3 species of Whales with just a few dolphins. This year was worst with **Humpback Whales** and 2 **Common Porpoises** (the last ones even not mentioned by the captain like last year).

Risso's, Pacific White Sided and **Northern Right Whales Dolphins** had been seen the day before. A British I met saw them but went 4 times on consecutive tours!

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