

Life list booster trip, California and Nevada, June 13/14-21/22, 2013

In September 2014, Fiona Reid and I ran a trial trip to California, which was generally successful and netted 70+ species. In June 2015 I am going to guide a trip to the Sierra Nevada and the adjacent part of the Great Basin. Compared to the 2014 trip, it will be more relaxed and involve much less driving, but more hiking (long hikes will be optional, with alternatives available). New moon is on June 16.

June 13. I'd prefer everybody to fly to Sacramento, but if some people can find affordable airfare only to San Francisco, they will be picked up on this day and driven to Sacramento (appr. 2 hrs), possibly with a short stopover in Martinez to look at amazingly tame **American Beaver** of the "golden" Californian subspecies. If we have to wait out the rush hour traffic in San Francisco, we can go see **Eastern Gray Squirrel** and **Brush Rabbit** in Golden Gate Park.

June 14. After picking up everyone, we'll drive to South Lake Tahoe (2 hrs). If there's a long gap between arrivals, we can go to Davis to see **Eastern Fox Squirrel**, **Mexican Freetail** (up close), and maybe look for **California Vole**. The amount of time we'll have at Lake Tahoe this day will depend on the time of everyone's arrival. If we get there early enough, we'll go to nearby Taylor Creek to look for **Long-eared**, **Yellow-pine**, **Lodgepole**, **Least** and **Allen's Chipmunk**. **Black Bear** and **Long-tailed Weasel** are possible there, while **California** and **Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels** and **Pine Squirrel** are very common (just as at many sites to be visited later on).

We'll stay in South Lake Tahoe, an unremarkable tourist trap where those willing to spend some time watching the burrows will have a chance to see **Northern** and **Mountain Pocket Gophers**. **Northern Raccoon** and **Striped Skunk** are possible here and elsewhere at night, and **Cougar** can be seen pretty much everywhere on night drives, although the probability is low.

June 15. We'll spend some more time at Taylor Creek (unless we see all target species the previous evening). If we still miss **Allen's** or **Long-eared Chipmunks**, we'll give another try at these species (and possibly **Snowshoe Hare** and **Ermine**) at Echo Lake nearby (an optional, mostly level hike of 2.5 miles round-trip might be involved). Then we'll drive to Mono Lake (2 hrs). Along the way we'll stop in Bridgeport to look at **Yuma Myotis**, and at the northwestern side of Mono Lake to check for **Long-tailed Weasel**, **American Mink**, **Bobcat**, **Sewellel**, **Western Harvest Mouse**, and **Montane Vole**. We'll stay in Lee Vining on the lakeshore.

June 16. In the morning we'll go back to the northwestern side of Mono Lake to look for the same five species and **Mountain Cottontail**. After breakfast we'll drive to Saddlebag Lake (30 min) to look for **Yellow-bellied Marmot** and **Alpine Chipmunk**. From there we'll go to Mono Pass Trail in Yosemite National Park (another 30 min). The trail is a steady, not particularly steep climb 3.7 miles each way, mostly shaded. **Belding's Ground Squirrel** is common along the way. At the end of the trail, the rare **California Bighorn Sheep** are sometimes visible and there is good **Western Heather Vole** habitat. Shortly before the end of the trail is a talus slope with **Alpine Chipmunk**, **American Pika** and (difficult) **Panamint Chipmunk**; it's also excellent habitat for **American Marten**, **Long-tailed Weasel**, and **Ermine**, so we'll sit and wait there for a few hours. People who don't want to hike Mono Pass Trail will have the option of

being left at Saddlebag Lake, where a few level trails around the lake are available, a small cafe serves good food, **Mountain Gopher** is common, **Western Heather Vole** and **Pika** are present, **American Marten** and **Ermine** are theoretically possible, and the scenery is great.

After dinner we'll go to the southern side of Mono Lake to spotlight for **Bobcat**, **American Badger**, **Pygmy Rabbit**, **Desert Cottontail**, **Black-tailed Jackrabbit**, **Sagebrush Vole**, **Ord's**, **Chisel-toothed**, **Merriam's** and **Panamint Kangaroo-rats**, **Dark** and **Pale Kangaroo Mice**, **Great Basin**, **Long-tailed** and **Least Pocket Mice**, **Deer** and **Brush Mice**, **Northern Grasshopper Mouse**, **Desert Woodrat**, and **Sagebrush Vole**. **Kit Fox** and **Coyote** occur here and at some of the following sites.

June 17. In the morning we'll go back to the southern shore of Mono Lake to look for **Piute Ground Squirrel**, **White-tailed Antelope Squirrel**, **Least Chipmunk** of a different subspecies, and whatever else might turn up, then drive to White Mountains (2 hrs), where two groves of the world's oldest trees grow. The first grove is easily accessible by car, the second one (slightly older) requires a 12-mile drive on a dirt road or a moderately difficult hike (4.2 miles round-trip). We'll decide if anyone wants to go to the second grove when we get to the first one. This area has **Elk**, **Panamint** and **Uinta Chipmunks**, **Desert Woodrat**, **White-tailed Jackrabbit**, and **Ermine**; once I found an **Inyo Shrew** under a log here. After looking for them, we'll return to Lee Vining and do a bit of spotlighting on the northeastern shore of the lake, looking for **Pygmy Rabbit** and other sagebrush-associated species.

June 18. We'll spend the morning around Mono Lake, then go to Coaldale, Nevada (2 hrs) to look at different types of sagebrush habitat. Although the species list here is similar to Mono Lake, some of them are more common; **Pronghorn**, **Desert Kangaroo Rat** and **Southern Grasshopper Mouse** are also present, and **Cliff Chipmunk** is possible. We'll spend the night in Tonopah (40 min away).

June 19. We'll spend more time around Tonopah, then return to Lee Vining, take an afternoon break, then do a night drive to Tioga Pass and Saddlebag Lake (1 hr total) looking for high-elevation species such as **Mt. Lyell Shrew** and **American Marten**. After that those willing will do more spotlighting around Mono Lake.

June 20. In the morning we'll drive across Yosemite National Park through various vegetation zones (3 hrs), with a stop at Tuolumne Meadows to look for various shrews and gophers, and enter Yosemite Valley. In the valley we'll look for Western Gray Squirrel and **Merriam's Chipmunk**, then wait until nightfall to look for **Ringtail** and **Black Bear** along Yosemite Falls Trail. Then we'll drive to Groveland (1 hr) along a road where **Gray Fox**, **Fisher**, **American Marten** and **Northern Flying Squirrel** are sometimes seen (we'll have the option of doing a short hike into one of giant sequoia groves to increase the chances and try also for **Bushy-tailed Woodrat** and other rodents). In Groveland we'll do a short walk to look for **California** and **Pinyon Mice**, and possibly **California Pocket Mouse** and **Big-eared Woodrat**.

June 21. In the morning we'll look for **Merriam's Chipmunk** and **Western Gray Squirrel** around Groveland (unless we see both the previous day). Then we'll drive to Sacramento (2 hrs). There will be an optional side trip to Davis to look for **Eastern Fox Squirrel** and the mass

emergence of **Mexican Freetails** from a larger colony (**Northern Raccoon, Bobcat, Striped Skunk, Sacramento Valley Red Fox, Gray Fox, Botta's Pocket Gopher, Western Harvest Mouse** and **California Vole** are also possible).

June 22. People flying out of San Francisco will be driven there, with a possible side trip to Grizzly Island to look for **Tule Elk, River Otter, American Mink** and **Muskrat**. Depending on the times of departure, there might also be the option of visiting Golden Gate Park to see **Eastern Gray Squirrel** and possibly **Brush Rabbit**.

List of possible species, with probability of seeing rated 0 (virtually impossible) to 5 (virtually guaranteed).

¹ Depending on individual schedules; ² Depending on individual effort; ³ The taxonomy of Sierra Nevada populations is currently uncertain.

1. Virginia Opossum 0-1¹
2. Cordilleran Water Shrew 1
3. Mt. Lyell Shrew 0
4. Montane Shrew 2
5. Vagrant Shrew 1
6. Ornate Shrew 1
7. Inyo Shrew 1
8. Merriam's Shrew 2
9. Trowbridge's Shrew 1
10. Broad-footed Mole 0
11. California Myotis 4
12. Western Small-footed Myotis 2
13. Yuma Myotis 5
14. Little Brown Myotis 1
15. Long-legged Myotis 1
16. Long-eared Myotis 1
17. Fringed Myotis 2
18. Silver-haired Bat 1
19. Canyon Bat (Western Pipistrelle) 5
20. Big Brown Bat 2
21. Western Red Bat 1
22. Hoary Bat 2
23. Spotted Bat 0
24. Townsend's Big-eared Bat 1
25. Pallid Bat 1
26. Mexican Freetail Bat 5
27. Big Freetail Bat 0
28. Western Bonneted Bat 1
29. Cougar 1
30. Bobcat 3
31. Coyote 5
32. Kit Fox 4

33. Red Fox 0-1¹
34. Gray Fox 3
35. Black Bear 4
36. Ringtail 2
37. Northern Raccoon 4
38. Western Spotted Skunk 1
39. Striped Skunk 2
40. American (Pacific) Marten 2
41. Fisher 1
42. Long-tailed Weasel 2
43. Ermine 2
44. American Mink 2
45. American Badger 3
46. River Otter 1-2¹
47. Feral Pig 0
48. Mule Deer 5
49. Elk 3-4¹
50. Pronghorn 3
51. Bighorn Sheep 2
52. American Pika 4
53. Pygmy Rabbit 4
54. Brush Rabbit 0-2¹
55. Mountain Cottontail 5
56. Desert Cottontail 5
57. Snowshoe Hare 1
58. Black-tailed Jackrabbit 5
59. White-tailed Jackrabbit 3
60. Sewellel 1
61. American Beaver 1-5¹
62. Yellow-bellied Marmot 4
63. Piute Ground Squirrel 4
64. Belding's Ground Squirrel 5
65. California Ground Squirrel 5
66. Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel 5
67. White-tailed Antelope Squirrel 4
68. Alpine Chipmunk 4
69. Least Chipmunk 5
70. Yellow-pine Chipmunk 5
71. Lodgepole Chipmunk 5
72. Long-eared Chipmunk 5
73. Allen's Chipmunk 4
74. Merriam's Chipmunk 4
75. Panamint Chipmunk 4
76. Cliff Chipmunk 1
77. Uinta Chipmunk 3
78. Eastern Gray Squirrel 0-5¹

79. Eastern Fox Squirrel 1-5¹
80. Western Gray Squirrel 4
81. Pine (Douglas's) Squirrel 5
82. Northern Flying Squirrel 2
83. Northern Pocket Gopher 1-3²
84. Mountain Pocket Gopher 1-3²
85. Botta's Pocket Gopher 0-1^{1,2}
86. California Pocket Mouse 1
87. Long-tailed Pocket Mouse 3
88. Great Basin Pocket Mouse 4
89. Little Pocket Mouse 3
90. San Joaquin Pocket Mouse 0
91. Dark Kangaroo Mouse 3
92. Pale Kangaroo Mouse 3
93. Ord's Kangaroo Rat 5
94. Chisel-toothed Kangaroo Rat 3
95. Panamint Kangaroo Rat 3
96. Desert Kangaroo Rat 3
97. Merriam's Kangaroo Rat 4
98. California Kangaroo Rat 0
99. California Mouse 2
100. Deer Mouse 5
101. Canyon Mouse 2
102. Brush Mouse 4
103. Pinyon Mouse 3
104. Northern Grasshopper Mouse 3
105. Southern Grasshopper Mouse 2
106. Western Harvest Mouse 1-2¹
107. Desert Woodrat 2
108. Big-eared Woodrat 3
109. Bushy-tailed Woodrat 2
110. Western Heather Vole 2
111. Montane Vole 4
112. California Vole 1-2¹
113. Long-tailed Vole 1
114. Sagebrush Vole 2
115. Common Muskrat 1-2¹
116. House Mouse 1
117. Black Rat 0
118. Norway Rat 1
119. Jumping Mouse sp. 1³
120. Northern Porcupine 1

The cost of the trip (double occupancy) will be \$2500 to \$2800 pp., depending on individual schedule. If you'd like more information, please email Vladimir Dinets, dinets@gmail.com