

REPORT ON THE MAMMALS OF THE BLACK MESA REGION, OKLAHOMA*

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During the month of August, 1949, a field party from Oklahoma A&M College, led by the writer, spent two weeks collecting mammals in the Black Mesa region of the Oklahoma Panhandle. Other members of the party were Paul A. White, John R. Beck, Milton R. Curd, Jones D. Reeves, Buford L. Tatum, E. B. Inman, Wade M. McCharen, William D. Welch, and Charles M. Patterson. The region visited is so distinct ecologically that it has been recognized by Blair and Hubbell (3) as constituting a Biotic District, the "Mesa de Maya." Results of this trip provide sufficient additions to the list of mammals published by Blair (2) to be of general interest.

The main camp was established north of Black Mesa on the property of Mr. Fred Tucker, and most day-to-day collections were made in that area. Both Mr. Fred Tucker and his brother Truman were most helpful in making suggestions and pointing out areas especially advantageous for collecting. Camp was approximately nine miles by road north of Kenton, six as the crow flies, and one half mile south of the Colorado state line (1)†. At this locality mesas, pastures, cultivated fields, and creek beds are all within easy walking distance.

The map (Fig. 1) shows the localities where collecting was done. This map has been adapted from the one by Schoff and Stovall (5). The contours are taken from rock strata, rather than actual elevations. These serve adequately to indicate changes in elevation, since such changes are usually abrupt, and the strata are practically horizontal. The positions of the mesas and the dissection of the area by the Cimarron River and its tributaries are quite apparent.

Acknowledgements are due to Dr. Rollin H. Baker of the University of Kansas for checking the identification of the pallid bat, *Antrozous pallidus*, and to Dr. W. B. Davis of Texas A&M for checking the wood rats, genus *Neotoma*, the deer mice, genus *Peromyscus*, and the pocket mouse, *Perognathus flavus*.

CHIROPTERA

Myotis subulatus melanorhinus (Merriam). The black-nosed bat. Prior to our visit this species was known from the district by a single specimen from 3 miles north of Kenton. We shot several on North Carrizzo Creek (3), and took a large sample from a cave in Tesequite Canyon (21).

Antrozous pallidus (LeConte). The pallid bat. Known previously from the district by a single specimen from 3 miles north of Kenton. We collected five of these bats at our campsite (1), and one on the nearby creek (3). They were quite numerous, but as with other species, they did not appear until the light was nearly gone.

Lasturus cinereus (Beauvois). The hoary bat. Not previously recorded from the district. A single specimen was collected as it flew over North Carrizzo Creek (3).

Corynorhinus rafinesquii pallescens Miller. The western lump-nosed bat. Not previously recorded from the district. Three specimens were collected in a small cave in Tesequite Canyon (17).

Eptesicus fuscus pallidus Young. The western big brown bat. Not previously recorded from the district. One specimen was collected on the creek (3), and twelve were taken from a crevice above a dripping spring in Labrier Canyon (12).

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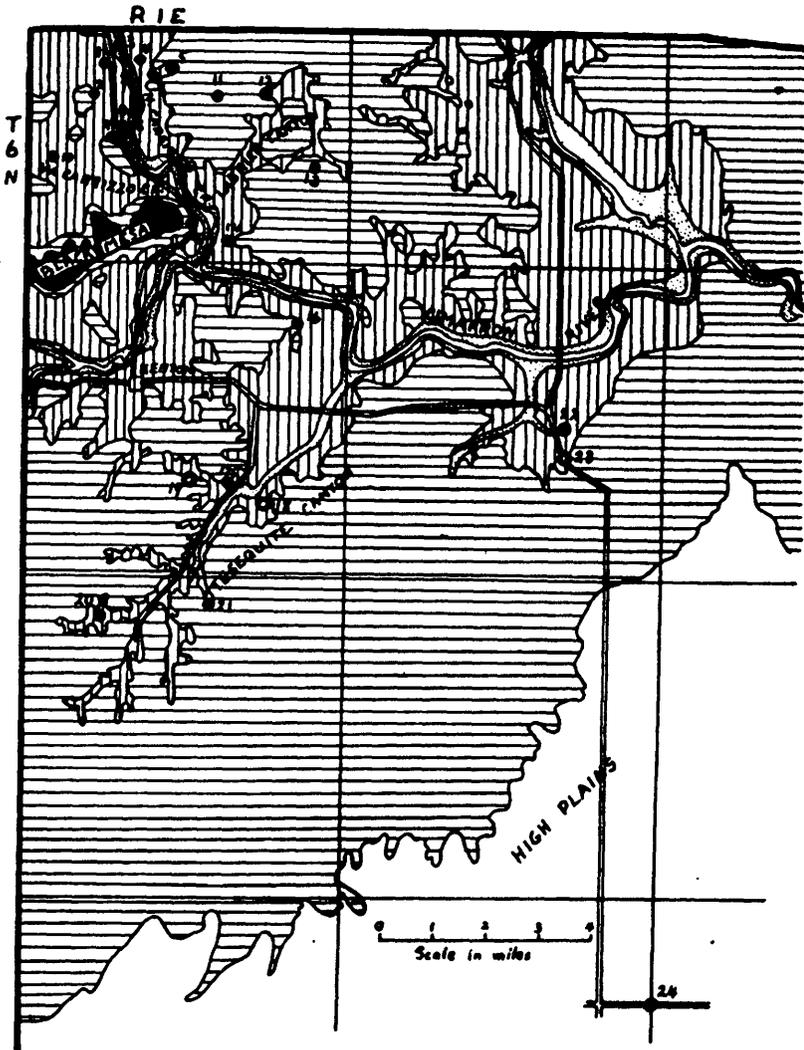


FIGURE 1. The Black Mesa region of the Oklahoma Panhandle. Numbers correspond to boldface numbers in parentheses in the text.

CARNIVORA

Canis latrans nebracensis Merriam. The plains coyote. Two skulls of this species were secured. One of these was found in West Carrizzo Canyon (10), and the other in a small canyon east of camp (6). These animals were heard at night on several occasions, and their tracks were seen along the creek. Specimens have not previously been recorded from the district.

Lynx rufus baileyi Merriam. The Bailey bobcat. Not previously recorded from the area. Remains of this species, consisting of the mandible, one forelimb with scapula, and vertebrae, were found near Labrier Canyon (11) .

Taxidea taxus berlandieri Baird. The southwestern badger. Not previously recorded from the district. Only one specimen, about two thirds grown, was collected from the mesa region. This animal was lassoed by a resident of the Cimarron River Valley east of Kenton (16). Another individual was seen on the road near the east end of Black Mesa (15), and signs of activity were observed at several other places. A second specimen was picked up dead 14 miles west of Boise City (24).

Procyon lotor hirtus Nelson & Goldman. The raccoon. Not previously recorded from the district. These animals are among the most abundant carnivores of the region. Tracks were common along North Carrizzo Creek, and every night their owl-like calls could be heard along the rocky mesa walls. Three subadults were seen crossing the road towards their den (9) just before sunrise one morning, and one was collected. A second specimen was picked up dead at Guymon, Texas County, enroute to the mesa region. The species has not previously been reported from the plains of the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Mephitis mephitis varians Gray. The long-tailed skunk. This species was not taken in Oklahoma, but one was shot among the rocks of Black Mesa about three miles west of the state line in Union County, New Mexico. Local residents say that at present the species is uncommon.

Conepatus mesoleucus figginsii Miller. The hog-nosed skunk. This species is frequently found in Furnace Canyon, Baca County, Colorado, which is tributary to North Carrizzo Creek and lies about eight miles north of the state line. Mr. Truman Tucker relates that he killed one a few years ago on his brother's property near the site of our camp; the skin having been sent to the State Game and Fish Department. Whether or not this specimen still exists is unknown.

Felis concolor hippolestes Merriam. The mountain lion. According to local residents this animal occasionally enters Oklahoma in this district, and several places were pointed out where these animals had been sighted.

Ursus americanus Pallas. The black bear. This animal also wanders into this portion of Oklahoma at times. One was reported at the time of our visit to have been seen about ten miles north of the state line in Colorado.

RODENTIA

Spermophilus spilosoma major Merriam. The spotted ground squirrel. Three of these animals were taken on the plains 15 miles west of Boise City (24). They are the first specimens from the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Spermophilus variegatus grammurus (Say). The variegated rock squirrel. This species was seen on numerous occasions, in Tesequite Canyon, and in other canyons as well. It seems to be most abundant on the north rim of Black Mesa, but was seen there only in New Mexico. One specimen was collected in a small canyon about one mile east of camp (5).

Cynomys ludovicianus ludovicianus Ord. The black-tailed prairie dog. Several colonies of these animals were seen in the mesa region. Specimens were taken from a town eight miles east of Kenton (22), and from a town four miles east of camp (13). Another town (8), was hunted, but no specimens were recovered from it.

Eutamias quadrivittatus quadrivittatus (Say). The Colorado chipmunk. In the mesa district this animal is found only in moist, juniper-forested canyons. Only a very few were seen, and one was collected one mile east of camp (5).

Cratogeomys castanops (Baird). The chestnut-faced pocket gopher. Not previously reported from Oklahoma, although Anthony (1) and Warren (6) both include western Oklahoma within the stated range of the species. We collected specimens in alfalfa fields along North Carrizzo Creek (7), and near the head of Tesequite Canyon (20). Signs of their presence were noted elsewhere in Tesequite Canyon (18), and near the prairie dog town east of Kenton (23).

Perognathus hispidus paradoxus Merriam. The hispid pocket mouse. Not previously reported from the district. The species was taken sparingly from regions adjacent to the camp on the valley floor. They were found along dry irrigation ditches, fence rows, roads, and in plowed fields (1, 4).

Perognathus flavus flavus Baird. The silky pocket mouse. These tiny mice were taken at several places near camp (1, 4). They were only rarely taken in traps, but were easily captured by hand at night, using a flashlight. They were found only on the valley floor.

Dipodomys ordii richardsoni (Allen). Richardson's kangaroo rat. Not previously recorded from the district. These animals were found to be very common all over the valley floor of the mesa region, as well as on the open plains to the southeast. They did not trap easily, but were easily collected at night with flashlight and pistol, using dust shot. Specimens were obtained from near the campsite (1), in Tesequite Canyon (17), and from the sand dunes of North Carrizzo Creek (3), as well as from the plains 14 miles west of Boise City (24).

Peromyscus truei truei (Shufeldt). The leaf-eared mouse. Deer mice of this genus were not taken in abundance during the period. This species was taken from the rocky slopes of mesas near camp (1, 2).

Peromyscus maniculatus osgoodi Mearns. The deermouse. Several of these small mice were taken from the valley floor and mesa slopes near camp (1, 2).

Peromyscus leucopus tornillo Mearns. The wood-mouse. This species was taken only from the valley floor near camp and from the stream courses (1, 3).

Neotoma micropus canescens Allen. The plains woodrat. Previously reported from Oklahoma only from the North Canadian (Beaver) River at the New Mexico state line. Specimens were taken in Tesequite Canyon (17), West Carrizzo Canyon (10), and near camp (1, 2), but they were nowhere as numerous as the other species encountered. There seems to be no obvious ecological separation of the three species in the district.

Neotoma mexicana fallax Merriam. The mexican woodrat. Taken in the same areas as the plains woodrat, but in greater numbers.

Neotoma albigula warreni Merriam. The white-throated woodrat. Most numerous of the woodrats taken in the area. Found abundantly in all of the areas where other species were taken. These woodrats are found all the way from the valley floor to the tops of the mesas, especially among the fallen rocks on the slopes, but to a lesser extent in more open areas where they build their nests around the cholla cactus plants, *Opuntia arborescens*.

Erethizon dorsatum bruneri Swenk. The porcupine. This species has increased in numbers in Oklahoma in the past 15 years. Most local residents recall when this animal was considered rare, but it is now becoming a pest, being a constant visitor to the irrigated fields of alfalfa along the streams. There are few cliffs in the area that do not harbor these animals. We collected one just below Robber's Roost (14), and another just east of the tip of Black Mesa (15). Signs were seen at numerous other places around the mesas, and in

Tesequite Canyon (17). A third specimen was given to members of our party by a man in Boise City who captured it on a telephone pole four miles east of that town.

Mus musculus Linnaeus. The house mouse. One specimen was taken from an abandoned house near camp (1). The house was in use as a granary.

LAGOMORPHA

Lepus californicus melanotis Mearns. The blacktailed jackrabbit. Not previously reported from the district. This species is not common in the mesa region at the present time. Only two individuals were seen during the period. These were out at night on the road north of Kenton (15). Both were collected.

Sylvilagus auduboniti neomexicanus Nelson. The New Mexico cottontail. This is the only small rabbit known from the mesa region. It is common on the valley floor and on the slopes of the mesas. Specimens were taken from the vicinity of camp (1), from West Carrizzo Canyon (10), and from Tesequite Canyon (20).

ARTIODACTYLA

Odocoileus hemionus macrotis (Say). The Colorado mule deer. This species, reported to be in this area by Duck and Fletcher (4), is here recorded with positive evidence for the first time. A large buck was seen by one of our party in Tesequite Canyon (19), and a set of leg bones consisting of radius, ulna, carpals, and cannon bone, were taken from a den cave in the same area. Tracks and droppings were seen on North Carrizzo Creek near camp, and two shed antlers were picked up on the mesa top east of camp (11).

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