



INTRODUCTION

This was primarily a mammal trip with a couple of targets Persian Fallow deer, Blandford's fox and hopefully some new small mammals, the report reflects mostly mammals but other taxa are mentioned in less detail.

We flew with easyjet which was fine.

Car Hire with Cal Auto via holiday autos – rubbish terrible service.

All accommodation booked in advance with Booking.com and with air BnB – honestly I prefer booking.com much easier to deal with.

Temperatures were varied from a couple of degrees in the Negev desert to upper 20's in the Dead Sea area and high teens elsewhere. We had one night of heavy rain.

Mike's report has some more specific site information.

The photos are hyperlinked to larger versions.

DIARY

17TH FEBRUARY 2018

We eventually arrived in Tel Aviv after an exciting aborted landing, and had the usual agro obtaining our hire car(why is it always so difficult) and made it out of Tel Aviv and a **fruit bat** on the way. After a bit of food we made it to the Negev desert, where we did some spotlighting looking for wildlife a **cape hare** and a couple of **jackals** and some **Dorcas gazelles** of note. We carried on south and had a good encounter with a **Sundevall's Jird** and a bit later managed to avoid a **Lesser Egyptian jerboa** in the road. We got a couple of hours sleep in the car before dawn.

18TH FEBRUARY 2018

We tried a few of the wintering wheatear sites but they had all left a few days before but we caught up with plenty of the common birds and a **fat sand rat** and more **Dorcas gazelles**. Plenty of hoopoes some nice trumpeter finches and the first of many graceful prinias were seen. The most interesting bird was an Eastern black redstart. We stopped off at the **Acacia gazelle** enclosure and easily located both **Acacia and Dorcas gazelles** before heading to Yovata services for lunch. A brief stop an Amram pillars produced a showy scrub warbler and we headed to Eilat to our hotel. We headed down to the beach where we located a couple of white eyed gulls although a little distant and a nice selection of waterbirds. A brief visit to the salt pans for greater flamingos and the nearby pools before an evening visit to the Yovata services for tea. We then spent a few hours driving round encountering a few nocturnal species **jackal, red fox, kuhl's pipistrelles, cape hares** and a rather nice **desert hedgehog**.



CAPE HARE



CRESTED LARK



DESERT LARK



SCRUB WARBLER



ACACIA GAZELLE



19TH FEBRUARY 2018

We were up early and headed to the Bird park in Eilat for a wander, a nice selection of birds but nothing significant, but slender billed gull and little green bee eaters are always nice to see. We checked the traps but only **eastern spiny mice** for our troubles. We stopped at Yovata services for ice cream before heading to Ein Gedi reserve. A nice selection of birds was present in the reserve but we had stopped for **Rock Hyrax**, and there were plenty of them all over the place and it is one of the best places to see them. However the place was full of idiot tourists one telling their children that they were carnivorous groundhogs you can guess the nationality! We checked into our accommodation went for a short night drive as options are limited in the area we caught up with a **naked tomb bat** but no sign of Blandford's fox or much else and headed back to our accommodation. We sat in the picnic area having a quite beer watching the probable **free tailed bats** when a **red fox** came trotting by with a chunk of bread.



EASTERN SPINY MOUSE



ROCK HYRAX



YELLOW VENTED BULBUL

20TH FEBRUARY 2018

We headed off north encountering a couple of groups of **Nubian ibex** along the way but the highlight was a massive roost of egrets and black kites. We worked our way up to Tirat Zvi fish ponds, it was a little tricky to find the entrance but well worth the effort as we quickly caught up with a nice **Egyptian mongoose** and several Pallas Gulls. The place was fully of herons and egrets several black storks and an osprey but it was the large numbers of **Egyptian mongoose** present that was the real highlight eight in total all showing very well. We headed to Neve Eitan fish ponds far less birdy but we did pick up a pygmy cormorant and a citrine wagtail. We carried on to Manot on the edge of Nahal Kziv reserve encountering several massive black kite kettles on the way. We checked into our nice accommodation with a great host had a cup of tea and just before dusk headed out for a night drive before tea. Not long into the night drive we came across our target a doe **Persian fallow deer** stood in a small road it was off quickly and we did not see it again. Our drive produced some green toads and we had some food before continuing our drive. Large numbers of military personnel were around the small roads we wanted to drive so we headed back to the sound of shelling. Our host popped by to let us know it was an exercise and nothing else.



PALLA'S GULL



EGYPTIAN MONGOOSE

21ST FEBRUARY 2018

Our traps in the garden had nothing at all so we headed to the Nahal Kziv reserve where we walked along the river, the place was just starting to bloom with flowers and butterflies were enjoying them as was a nice hummingbird hawkmoth. A few birds but nothing of note, mammal wise a couple of **rock hyrax** and a **jackal** but it was very warm and a nice walk. We headed up to the Lebanon border to the Hanita Forest for a picnic it was an amazing view and we explored but did not see very much of note. The night drive was quite successful with a **porcupine**, lots of **wild boar**, **jackals** and a **southern white bellied hedgehog**.

22ND FEBRUARY 2018

We checked our traps and had an **eastern spiny mouse** and a **Macedonian mouse**, we headed to the Hula valley area for the day. Here 55,000 cranes were present quite a sight, a nice selection of birds was present greater spotted eagle, black winged kite the highlights a few turtles and some water frogs. **Coypu** were everywhere as were rat holes but no sign of any rats. Early afternoon we needed some food so headed off and to locate some followed by a search for mountain gazelle which eventually took us to Gamla reserve. Here we saw a couple of griffon vultures, Syrian woodpecker and a blue rock thrush and a cat which looked good for wildcat but was apparently a pet. There were some distant **wild boars** but no gazelle. However on the drive back we found a few **rock hyrax** and also some **mountain gazelle**, and one last stop for little owls. After some food we did another night drive **red fox**, **badger** and **wild boar** all seen.



COMMON CRANE



SOUTHERN WHITE BREASTED
HEDGEHOG



MACEDONIAN MOUSE



NUBIAN IBEX



COYPU



MOUNTAIN GAZELLE



SPUR WINGED PLOVER



LITTLE GREEN BEE EATER

23RD FEBRUARY 2018

The traps produced yet another **eastern spiny mouse**, and two rather nice **Macedonian mice**, it was really good to catch several of these. It was time to head south for the last couple of days and we drove back down to the Negev desert area just west of Beer Sheva. Here we had a spot of lunch in a rather large shopping centre which had its own train inside. We checked into our accommodation nearby and after stocking up on supplies we headed out. We were looking for good night driving opportunities and an area to set some traps after scoping out some areas we popped down to Nizzana. Here we located a distant McQueen's bustard and several southern grey shrikes on what was a lovely evening. We had something to eat and then headed out on the night drive. Unfortunately it was not very productive just **2 red foxes**, **2 jackals** and a few **cape hares** for our efforts despite several hours of hard work, but that is how it goes sometimes. We drove back to our accommodation and settle down for a beer before bed.



CITRINE WAGTAIL



ARABIAN BABBLER



BLACKSTART

24TH FEBRUARY 2018

A Sat Nav error had us on a road near the Egyptian border, where we have several Dorcas gazelles and a nice fox but although on the Sat Nav and the map apparently we were not supposed to be on the road as two hummers full of Israeli defence Force troops told us. We got an escort back to the main road, fortunately we were not in trouble they were just concerned for our safety. The traps yielded a nice **Anderson's gerbil** and we had a few Arabian babblers assisting us. We had a look round the desert without much luck before heading to Tel Aviv. Here we visited Shoham Forest park which was busy with weekend picnickers and did a bit of birding, lots of stonechats, stone curlew and common species, encountering a nice **red fox** on the way. We headed to Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv at dusk and found some rather tame **jackals** allowing for some nice photo opportunities great to see them so close up. We did some night driving round several roads in Shoham Forest park and its environs but saw nothing of note so headed back.

25TH FEBRUARY 2018

We checked the traps nothing but **eastern spiny mice** a common species it seems in Israel found in many habitats. We headed to the Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv for a wander for an hour or so before we had to head to the airport. Plenty of monk parakeets, a nice pied kingfisher and a good selection of common birds. The bird park was having some construction work so was birdless and that was the end of the trip and we headed to the airport and home after a rather eventful trip.



PALESTINIAN SUNBIRD



BLUETHROAT



LITTLE OWL



RED FOX



FALSE APOLLO



PIED KINGFISHER



GOLDEN JACKAL

CHECKLISTS

MAMMALS - 28



| | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Dorcas Gazelle | Nubian Ibex | Acacia Gazelle |
| Mountain Gazelle | Red Fox | Golden Jackal |
| Rock Hyrax | Desert Hedgehog | Southern White Bellied Hedgehog |
| Persian Fallow Deer | Coypu | Egyptian Mongoose |
| Naked Tomb Bat | Eastern Spiny Mouse | Macedonian Mouse |
| Anderson's Gerbil | Sundevalls Jird | Fat Sand Rat |
| Egyptian Fruit Bat | Lesser Egyptian Jerboa | Badger |
| Wild Boar | Indian Crested Porcupine | Red Fox |
| Golden Jackal | Kuhl's Pipistrelle | Bat sp |
| House Mouse | | |
| Water Buffalo* | Camel** | Arabian Oryx*** |
| Scimitar Horned Oryx*** | | |

* Reintroduced, ** Domestic, *** Captive (reintroduction programme)



EASTERN SPINY MOUSE

DORCAS GAZELLE

ROCK HYRAX

BIRDS - 112

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Blackstart | Northern Wheatear | Brown Necked Raven |
| Spectacled Warbler | Rock Dove | Little Green Bee-eater |
| Collared Dove | Hoopoe | Robin |
| Trumpeter finch | Graceful Prinia | Black Kite |
| Sparrowhawk | Peregrine | Desert Lark |
| Buzzard (<i>ssp vulpinus</i>) | White Crowned Wheatear | White Wagtail |
| House Sparrow | Stonechat | Spur Winged Plover |
| Crested Lark | Spanish Sparrow | Sardinian Warbler |
| Palestinian Sunbird | Yellow Vented Bulbul | Egyptian Goose |
| Hen Harrier | Teal | Mallard |
| Hooded Wheatear | Scrub Warbler | Laughing Dove |
| House Crow | Grey Heron | Black Winged Stilt |
| Greenshank | Redshank | Greenshank |
| Little Egret | Western Reef Heron | White Eyed Gull |
| Armenian Gull | Pied Kingfisher | Black Headed Gull |
| Greater Flamingo | Shelduck | Great White Egret |
| Cattle Egret | Shoveler | Marsh Harrier |
| Pintail | Barn Swallow | Common Swift |
| Ring Necked Parakeet | Little Grebe | White Fronted Kingfisher |
| Moorhen | Cormorant | Ruff |
| Chiffchaff | Slender Billed Gull | Bluethroat |
| Sand Martin | Crag Martin | Common Myna |
| Fan Tailed Raven | Hooded Crow | Tristriams Grackle |
| Kestrel | Southern grey Shrike | Cetti's Warbler |
| Pallas Gull | Desert Tawny Owl | Black Stork |
| White Stork | Osprey | Blackbird |
| Citrine Wagtail | Jay | Pygmy Cormorant |
| Alpine Swift | Greenfinch | Snipe |
| Skylark | Common Crane | Hoopoe |
| Glossy Ibis | Kingfisher | Water Rail |
| Little Stint | Gadwall | Widgeon |
| Grey Plover | Avocet | Greater Spotted Eagle |
| Corn Bunting | Blue Rock Thrush | Little Swift |
| Syrian Woodpecker | Griffon Vulture | Little Owl |
| Mc Queens Bustard | Arabian Babbler | Long Legged Buzzard |
| Ringed Plover | Common Sandpiper | Marsh Sandpiper |
| Spotted Redshank | Eastern Mourning Wheatear | Monk Parakeet |
| Isabelline Wheatear | | |
| Ostrich*** | | |

*** Captive (reintroduction programme)

SELECTED OTHERS



Allanacstria deyrollei

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| False Apollo | Painted Lady | Red Admiral |
| Clouded Yellow | Orange Tip | Cleopatra |
| Small White | Large White | Allanacstria deyrollei |
| Hummingbird Hawkmoth | Red Admiral | Green Striped White |
| Clouded yellow | | |
| Western Caspian Turtle | Rough Tailed Rock Agama | Levant Green Frog |
| Lebanon Lizard | Green Toad | Sinai Fan-fingered Gecko |
| Bridled Mabuya | | |
| | | |

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