

Bat box check: 16 August 2009

For our 169th box check we had just enough people to start two ladders. Eliza Poole, sporting a new blonde look, and just vaccinated, bravely climbed the ladder and checked most of the boxes. We also had Ian and Lisa, but Natasha was away on Christmas Island, trying to save the critically endangered pipistrelle



The tree with box 38 has a horizontal hollow log nest box which was occupied by a Brushtail, so Lisa called me over to photograph it



And the lidless box C33 still had a sleeping Ringtail inside, so I was unable to replace the lid yet again. It looked a bit bedraggled but was determined not to abandon its snug box just because of a little rain.



The two teams gathered quite a lot of bats – most of them collected by Lisa as Eliza and I mainly found boxes empty or invaded by ant colonies. We drove up to the Visitor Centre and set up under the rotunda where Lisa organized a show-and-tell for some passing park visitors who had never seen a little bat



Ian managed the scales while Lisa and I assessed bats



I had to leave early to attend a family dinner, which gave Eliza an opportunity to do some bat assessing and develop her own unique style of immobilising a bat and measuring it with calipers



More visitors stopped by to be introduced to little bats



Lisa emailed the results to me when she had entered them into a spreadsheet, so here is a summary:

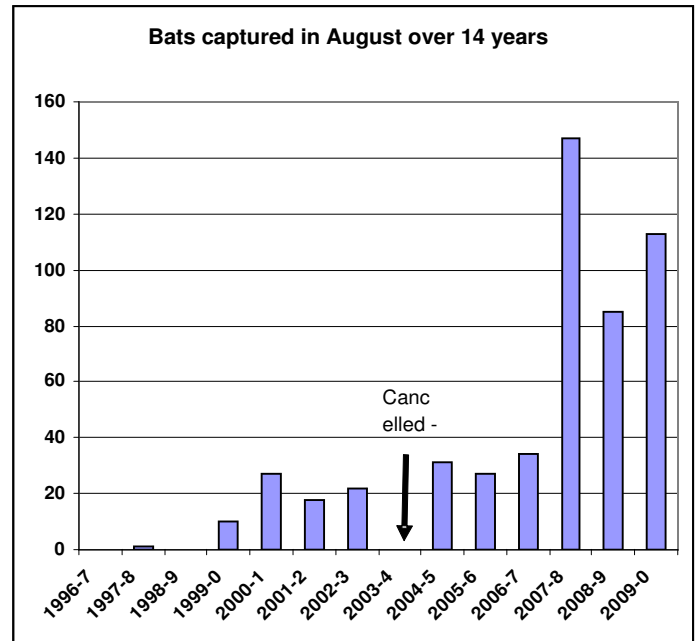
Box	Bats	Species	Adult		Band
			M	F	
C36	39	Gould's	11	28	5
C28	30	Gould's	11	19	3
	3	Lge Forest	1	2	
C30	19	Gould's	3	16	2
C29	15	Gould's	7	8	2
	1	Lge Forest	1		
C13	5	Gould's	2	3	
C25	1	Gould's		1	
	113	Total	36	77	12

113 bats in August is an unusually large number. Compared with earlier years, it used to be normal until 2006 to find 25 to 30 bats in the boxes, then this suddenly changed in 2007. Since that time a large number of bats has been prepared to go on using our boxes through the winter. Only 12 (10%) have bands.

	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-0
Bats	31	27	34	147	85	113

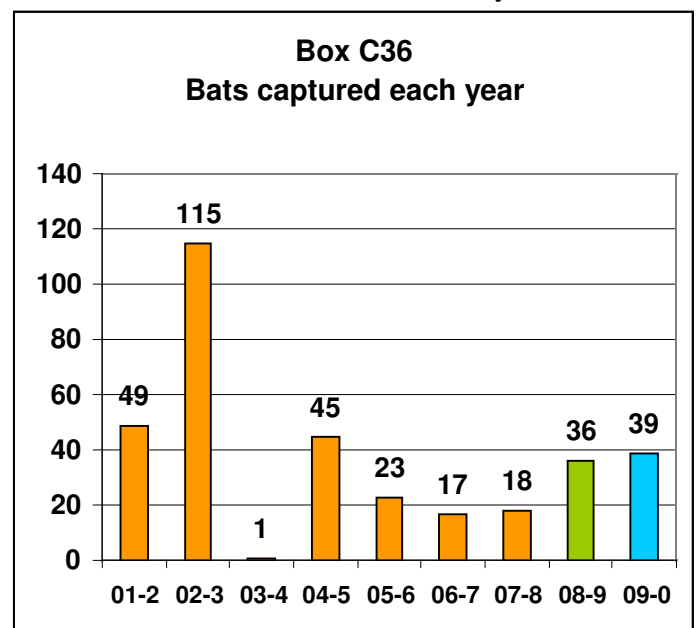
The mix of species is fairly normal, except last year we found some Freetails, which is very unusual in August

	Aug 07	Aug 08	Aug 09
Gould's	147	76	109
Large Forest		4	4
Freetail		5	
Total	147	85	113



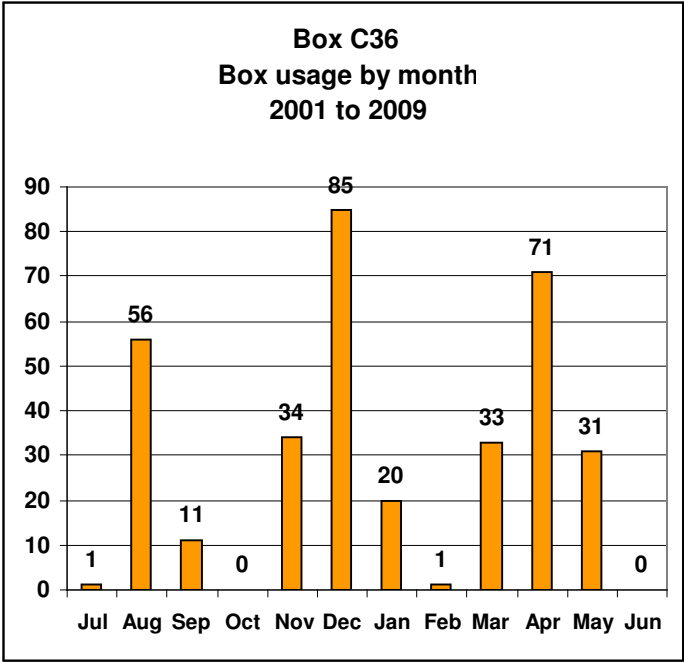
Box 36

This box had 39 Gould's bats in it this month. It was installed in August 2001 and proved quite popular with the bats in its second year, but their interest in it seems to have declined since then – only one bat was found in it over the 2003-4 year. This month's haul of 39 is more than the total for all of last year..



As boxes were checked 12 times a year until last year, and have been checked only once so far this year, it is

possible we are seeing a revival of interest in this box. All bats have been Gould's except a solitary Freetail in June 2003, which has not been repeated, so must have been an experiment by the Freetail.



Seasonality of use of this box has been very erratic with 3 strong peaks and not much in between. But the peaks have been created by very large groups found using this box in August, December and April, so they are not an indicator of frequent usage, just of large groups congregating. We have found solitary bats 11 times, but more often quite large groups

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
01-2					17	28		1	3			
02-3			11			56	1		20	17	10	
03-4	1											
04-5		3					1		9	18	14	
05-6		11			1		2		1	1	7	
06-7		1					15			1		
07-8					16	1	1					
08-9		2								34		
09-0		39										
Tota l	1	56	11	0	34	85	20	1	33	71	31	0

These boxes were set up to attract bats during winter, and in August this box has succeeded very nicely, but in June and July has been quite ineffective.

Next box inspection will be in October, probably the 11th at 2 p.m. Will let you all know when Natasha returns and we set a firm date

