

Harp trapping 11 to 13 March 2011

We had fine weather for our weekend of trapping. Natasha brought two traps, Lisa brought another three, so we had five traps spread along the usual track from the Organ Pipes to the pump-shed, surrounded by orb webs. Marcus, Debbie and her PhD student friend from VUT, Sylvia Osterrieder, helped.



Next morning there were more bats than we usually catch, in all traps except the last, huddled for warmth



I brought Jessica Whinfield from Ivanhoe, newly vaccinated and eager for bat field work, to help collapse the traps and do data recording.



We set up in the Jack Lyale Centre as usual, and got

to work, three assessors and three scribes.



Sylvia plans to get into a PhD studying the dolphins in Port Stephens, Queensland, and is about to set off to start field work.



We found six species of bats, including several Little Forest Bats, at 5 grams each



On the first morning there was one Lesser Long-eared Bat, much photographed as we so rarely see this species. We had no Freetails this year, but they were a surprise last year as we don't expect them to fly low enough to get captured in harp traps. We had several Large Forest Bats and Chocolate Wattled Bats, and a couple of old banded Gould's bats, including one with a bird band that must be near 10 years old. Altogether we assessed 97 bats the first day.



Nyctophilus – Lesser Long-eared



Little Forest Bat



Bird-banded Gould's



The number of spider webs was amazing: orb weavers all over the woodland, scrambling up their anchor lines to escape when we bumped into their webs



The second morning we had a slightly smaller team, and as expected somewhat fewer bats, but still counted 65, so the drop was less than expected



We again had a good mix of species, though again dominated by Gould's Wattled Bats



With Natasha, Debbie and I assessing, Sylvia and Robert Irvine scribing, we finished up at 10. Debbie took the bats home for the day, to be released after dark.

One of the glider boxes had a large bee swarm cover-

ing one wall – thousands of bees. Many other glider boxes look quite dilapidated – they have returned to a state of neglect so the gliders are suffering a shortage of accommodation.



I went down to close the one box left open in February and found a pair of gliders had moved in. We had a lot of that going on in the late 1990s when also the glider boxes were neglected and in disrepair, so many gliders moved into the bat boxes as the only available alternative. These were in C29. Promises were made in 1989 to maintain boxes and habitat, and are not being kept.



Altogether we had captured 162 bats, the largest number since 1996 when we made the mistake of releasing the bats found in the boxes, which all flew straight into the nets. So this very good result shows a lot of young naïve newly independent bats (females

showed a large majority of prepartous, with few more-experienced post-lactating ones) and a very successful breeding season. Only Gould's and Large Forest Bats, the species that breed in the boxes, had a predominance of females.

Species	Both days	%	M	F
Gould's	136	84.0	43	93
Chocolate	8	4.9	5	3
Large Forest	6	3.7	2	4
Southern Forest	1	0.6	1	0
Little Forest	10	6.2	9	1
Lesser long-eared	1	0.6	0	1
Total	162	100.0	60	102

The percentage distribution among species varies from year to year but this year's result is fairly close to previous results, except for the 14.6% of Freetails last year. This is the Gould's percentage:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
73.5	73.5	82.8	87.0	73.2	81.4

We had 5 Lesser Long-eared Bats in 1999, and only 1 or 0 each year since then.

Bats per trap night show some fluctuation within a fairly small range.

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
10.4	6.1	18.1	12.8	16.2	11.8

We had rain much of Sunday afternoon, so were very fortunate with the weather both mornings.

Next box check: Sunday 18 April 2 p.m.