

Bat box check: Organ Pipes 5 June 2011

I arrived at 2:20 to find Natasha and Ian just starting off with the ladder towards the first tree with boxes, and nobody else about, so we managed just one ladder moving north along the track, finding boxes with droppings but no bats until box 37. This one also had three paper-wasp next chambers, two still capped so with occupants inside.



Robert Irvine came along, with George Westwood, with a young couple he had rounded up and Natasha spent 20 minutes with them at a show-and-tell.



Then box 29, propped open last time as there was a possum inside, still had a glider nest in it



Box 3 which has a warped back plate and a chewed bottom plate, had a Brushtail in it, which was very

anxious when my head appeared in the opening, so I shut the box and let it be. Amazing how it squeezed in



The largest group of bats was in box 22, which was just hanging by a thread, the bottom screw corroded off and the top one surrounded by old bits of bark. It came away from the tree as I opened it, with 29 bats inside that would soon have been bounced around if the box had fallen.



Most of them were Gould's but there were 5 Large Forest Bats as well, all squashed into a small space



We finished up around 5 o'clock after Robert & Natasha went off to start a second ladder. Just as we arrived back at the car park, a family who had been out walking the park were arriving at their car and

agreed to come and see what we were doing. They ended up staying the whole evening to help us with data recording and weighing bats: Chris, Angela and Indy Hewitt and their young friend Daniel from Colombia. Natasha started off with a session about bats and what we record about them, which got them very excited to be invited to join in.



Angela scribed for me, while young Daniel managed the scales. Debbie arrived and Indy scribed for her.



Soon another couple, Jamie and Lisa Larmour-Reid arrived and Lisa scribed for Natasha, so we had several beginners enjoying their introduction to the world of bats



Ian, Robert and George had to leave part-way through the evening but we still had enough scribes for the

work to proceed smoothly and finished up at 7:30, getting through 109 bats of four species. We drove down into the valley and Natasha lined everyone up for a pep-talk about the procedure for releasing bats in the dark



Sylvia Osterrieder arrived and joined the release.



It had begun to rain fairly steadily so it was a rather wet release but everyone was too excited to not be there and within 15 minutes all the bats flew off. As always the one Freetail wanted to perch on a bag and consider the next move very carefully before taking off. We finished up just on 98 o'clock, which is pretty good for having so many bats to deal with. They probably all went straight to boxes to get dry & warm.



We had captured 109 bats all told, with the male-to-female ratio not far off 1:1, probably because of the late second breeding so the young males have not left home to seek other breeding colonies yet.

Box	Bats	Species	M	F
C22	24	Gould's	8	16
	5	Lge Forest	2	3
C35	27	Gould's	12	15
C32	18	Gould's	9	9
C31	13	Gould's	6	7
C42	6	Gould's	2	4
C24	5	Gould's	1	4
C37	5	Gould's	3	2
C15	2	Gould's	2	
	1	Freetail		1
C07	2	Gould's	2	
C19	1	Chocolate	1	
	109	Total	48	61

Compared with previous June results, a big leap up back to where it was two years ago. June results took off from a quite low level 5 years ago:

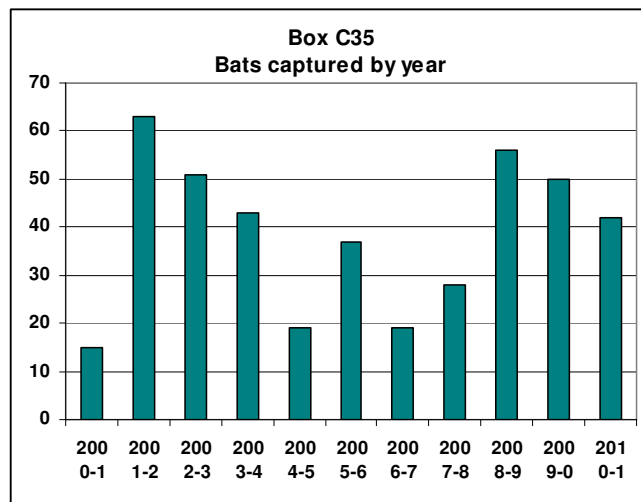
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bats	14	41	68	110	75	109
Incr		+193%	+66%	+62%	-32%	+45%

The mix of species is the same as last year's, though there was only 1 Freetail, with the big change being a large increase in the number of Gould's, almost double last year's catch

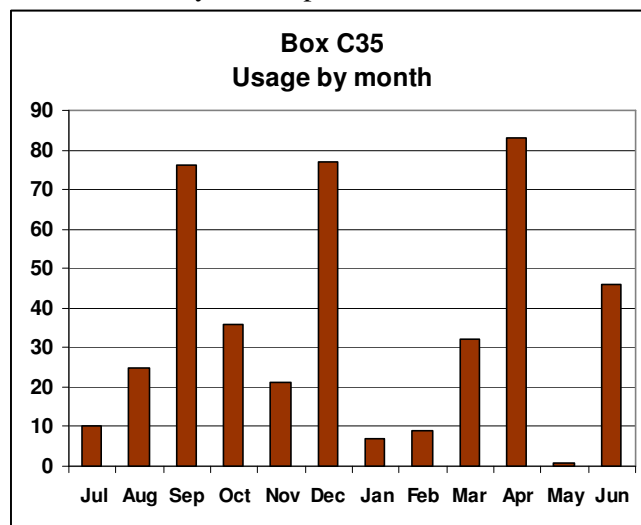
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Gould's	58	93	53	102
Large Forest	3	5	5	5
Chocolate			3	1
Freetail	7	12	14	1
Total	68	110	75	109

Box 35

This box was a gift from the Queensland box Co, led by Frank Box, installed in Feb 2001 and used almost instantly – the Gould's bats had by then become accustomed to roosting in boxes and quickly investigated any new ones. Usage has fluctuated up and down over the decade since then, but seems to have increased quite substantially in the past three years, when we have been checking the boxes each second month and total bats should have halved, but instead increased. If these last three columns are double in height to make them equivalent to the years when we checked the boxes every month, you can see that this one is now more intensively used than in the mid-2000s.



The seasonal pattern shows a maximum in spring, closely followed by autumn with near 30% each season, both seasons dominated by a single month. Summer and winter usage are also almost equal to one another, near 20% each. So it is a year-round box but more favoured in spring and autumn. It has really been used mainly in Sep, Dec and Apr which have had 55% of the year's captures.



We have now checked this box 105 times, caught 423 bats in it, which is about the median of our 37 boxes, found bats in it 48 times, with an average group size of 8.8, close to the average. It has had 11 solitary bats and five big groups of between 20 and 30 bats, as this month with 27. All the bats have been Gould's.

Next box check will be on Sunday 14 August at 2 p.m.