

Organ Pipes NP bat box check August 2011: Part 2

I completely forgot to follow up about the Freetail with the implant. It took a while to remember that Stephen Griffiths, a PhD student at Melbourne uni, has been implanting microchips (about the size of a grain of rice, he tells me) in Freetails at Gresswell Forest, north of Latrobe University in Bundoora. This implant was far bigger than a grain of rice.



but Debbie agreed to take the Freetail home for the night and I emailed Stephen about it and telephoned Lisa Godinho, who has worked with him on this project.

Stephen drove out to Debbie's next morning, confirmed it is one of his bats and retrieved it from her. The implant is a temperature logger to record the bat's body temperature. He had implanted six of these in Freetails, hoping to retrieve them in spring, when bats tend to reoccupy the boxes at Gresswell after going elsewhere for the winter. To everyone's surprise it flew out to Organ Pipes, 42 km northwest, instead.

So for the first time we have some information about how far a Freetail will travel between roost sites – at least 42 km.

Steve told me the implant was inserted about 6 weeks earlier to record every 3 minutes the bat's body temperature. This will provide a complete history for this period of the bats ventures in and out of torpor – how often does it go into torpor, for how long, how long does it take to get in and out, how much of its life is spent in torpor this time of year etc.

He took the bat out to Healesville to the vet who inserted the implant, to have it taken out again, then returned the bat to box C42 where it had been found – I hope the big ant colony had by then moved out.

So – a pretty amazing find overall.