

## Organ Pipes NP Bat box check 9 October

After a drizzly morning we had a dry and windless afternoon for climbing ladders and filling bags with little bats. Natasha and I had Nancy Peplow (FOOP volunteer over the last few years) and Paul D (bush-walking friend of Robert Irvine) to help with ladders, carrying bags, recording box contents. Eva Reda, 17-year-old VCE student, came along to help Natasha too



Box 16 again had many bats, Gould's & Freetails



Little box 35, the Queensland box, had 8 Gould's



Paul and I checked some of the glider boxes. The same Brushtail occupied one of the old lidless boxes,

and threatened us with a fight to the death. Several bat boxes had big ant colonies and were propped open.



One old glider box of which Terry flipped open the lid last month had a big bee colony still active although it was open to the weather, so more drastic action is needed



Only one box we checked had a family of gliders in it – probably four of them all snuggled together. There were bats in 23 of the 37 boxes



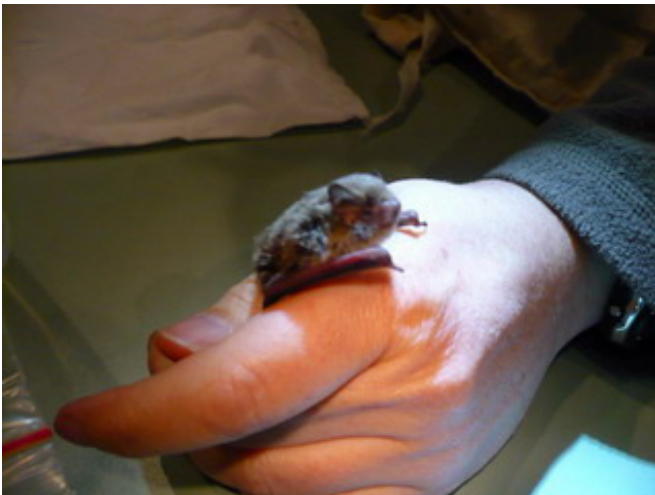
Paul stayed to help with the data sheets before heading off to Kilmore, and Sylvia helped for an hour or so. She came out here from Germany hoping to do post-grad work on dolphins but has been let down and stranded by the failure of the proposed project. She



has now found another supervisor in WA and is off to Perth soon to take up the opportunity there.



So we said our farewells and hoped it all works for her.



Most of the bats were Gould's but one box had 11 Forest Bats, including our first-ever Small Forest Bat, *Vespadelus vulturnus* among 10 Large ones. The first addition to our species list since 1999.



After Sylvia left, there were just Natasha and me for over an hour, doing our own scribing. Natasha slowly processing the 16 Freetail, one of which was the bat with the implant we found in August, which had been taken off to Healesville to have its implant removed, then released at Latrobe Uni. It apparently decided it

really and truly wants to live at Organ Pipes and has flown across the 42 km gap yet again, a big scar on its back showing where the implant had been removed. About 20 bats had bands on them, including one old bird band, indicating about a ten-year-old bat



We were almost halfway through the 23 bats when Debbie arrived and the work speeded up with three of us. We finished up about 10 o'clock and took a fair while to release so many bats, which were all eager to fly off and start feeding. Left the park just before 11 p.m.

Box	Bats	Species	M	F	Esc
C16	28	Gould's	5	23	
	2	Freetail	1	1	
C37	29	Gould's	6	23	
C01	27	Gould's	2	25	
C07	26	Gould's		26	2
C03	16	Gould's	2	14	5
C31	15	Gould's	2	13	
C29	14	Gould's	2	12	
C36	12	Gould's		12	
	1	Freetail	1		
C19	10	Lge Forest		10	
	1	Sml Forest		1	
C25	10	Gould's	5	5	
C23	9	Gould's	5	4	
C27	9	Gould's	5	4	
C35	8	Gould's	6	2	
C42	8	Freetail	1	7	
C14	3	Freetail		3	
	1	Gould's	1		
C34	3	Gould's	2	1	
C05	2	Gould's		2	
C13	2	Freetail	1	1	
C22	2	Gould's	2		
C32	2	Gould's	2		
C20	1	Gould's	1		
C28	1	Gould's		1	1
C38	1	Gould's	1		
	<b>243</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>8</b>

We ended up with 243 captured bats, plus 8 others escaped. There were 3.6 females to each male bat. Results in October have been increasing over the past 5 years, and are now up 94% on 2006

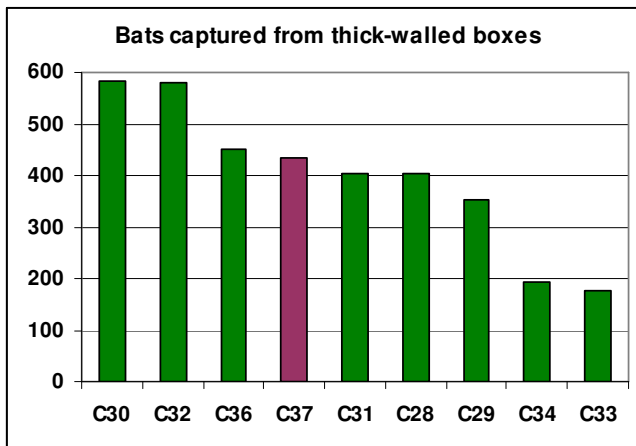
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Bats	125	141	161	200	220	243
Incr	-8%	+13%	+14%	+24%	+10%	+11%

Much of the fluctuation is due to the Gould's which was steady over three years then suddenly increased this year, probably due to the double breeding last summer/autumn. Forest Bats are well down this year.

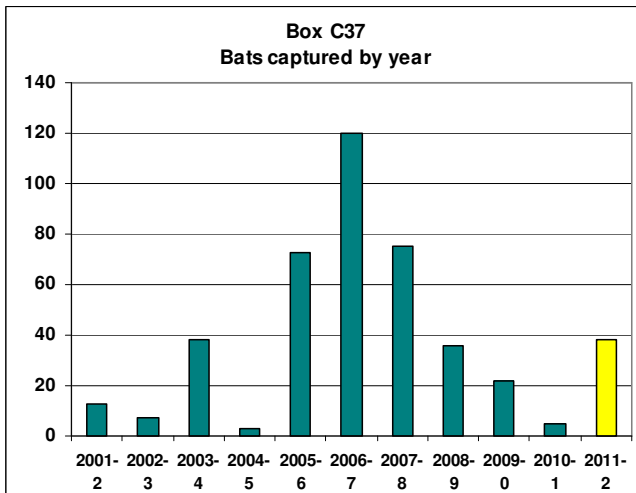
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Gould's	150	160	155	216
Large Forest	7	26	49	10
Freetail	4	14	16	16
Small Forest				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>243</b>

### Box 37

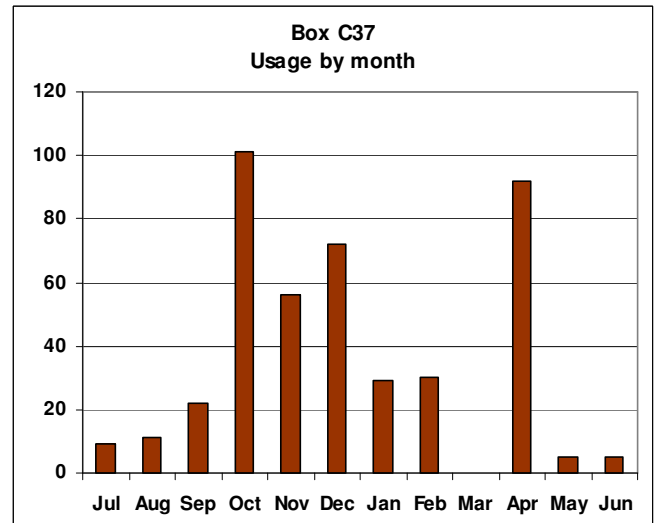
This was installed in Nov 2001, the last of 9 thick-walled boxes, on the same tree as C13. It faces north. It has now had 434 bats in it, so it is one of the more used of this design of boxes. Those at the bottom end of the scale have had big problems with ant colonies.



Usage peaked in 2006-7 and has been in continuous decline ever since, but seems to be recovering this year, perhaps because of the wet year and the double breeding.



Usage of the box peaks in April and October, and continues through the breeding season into summer. These boxes were set up in the hope of attracting bats through the winter dormancy period, but this one has contributed very little to achieving this goal.



All the bats using this box have been Gould's.

**Next box check: Sunday 18 December, 2 p.m. (in the hope of avoiding the birthing season)**