

## Organ Pipes bat trapping March 2013

On 30 March at 4:30 p.m. about 14 people assembled to help set up harp traps along two tracks and in Jackson's Creek. Lindy brought six traps from Arthur Rylah Institute, Tanja brought 9 from ARCUE. She and Stephen worked at setting up a bank of three in the creek below the Pipes



Then tied together two more to set up near them



Meanwhile Debbie and nephew Tate took charge of setting up four along the pump-shed track



There have been reports of motorcycle groups entering the park at night and hooning the tracks, so barriers – concertina fencing and witch-

es' hats - were placed along the track to warn people of the traps



The creek team put the last two traps to the north of the first three, stretching their bank of traps almost across the creek



Lindy took a team to set up six traps along the track to the Tessellated Pavement. Nearly everyone who had helped lined up for a photo before we went off home



Tanja attached little notices explaining the traps to the trap bags and the fencing. The typist (not Tanja) had left a serious typo in the text





We were all out of the park by 7:30 – a great effort.

### **Sunday morning**

An amazing number of people rose early to help empty the traps and experience little bats: Lindy, Stephen and Tanja, Kim Downs, Austin O'Malley, the Gustus family – Tony, Melinda & Carl – Janet Creak, John Schwartz, Lil Morrison, Michael Bajer, John Smith, Ernie Carpanzano and later in the morning Brigitte and Jessica Whinfield.



Lindy took a large team along the Pavement track to check the 6 traps and found 21 bats of four species; Stephen, Tanja, Robert and John dismantled the five empty traps in the creek, then checked the four traps along the pump-shed track and



found 12 bats in the last two traps.

Meanwhile Stephen and Tanja fetched a ladder and started opening the 8 boxes known to attract Freetails, finding 12 of them, and 13 male Gould's from which Tanja also wanted to collect scats to compare what male and female bats eat.



The traps were all sodden so were spread out under the visitor centre rotunda to dry and work proceeded inside to examine the 33 bats one by one and assess species, gender, reproductive condition and measure forearms and weights.



Meanwhile 25 styrofoam cups with bats that were commanded to defecate and produce samples of their work for Tanja were set aside until last. Some groups of casual park visitors wandered in and Debbie took charge of the show-and-tell to introduce them to the delights of little bats.

Lindy had her banding gear and banded 19 of the bats, a very delicate operation with the tiny Little Forest Bats weighing four grams each. The other 14 already had bands. Late in the morning work got under way on the cupped bats – 13 Gould's and 12 Freetails. To Tanja's delight most had at last defecated so she had samples to store in little vials for later DNA analysis to learn what they had been eating.





Brigitte and Jessica Whinfield arrived and got into helping with the bat assessing and scribing.



The Freetails are big enough for PIT tags (micro-chips) to be inserted under the skin between their shoulder blades, so individuals can be identified, and all 12 had Trovan chips inserted using a hypodermic needle by Stephen. As this species is extremely intolerant of wrist bands, this is the only sure way to mark individuals for later recognition without harming them



Several of the Freetails had odd white patches and spots in unorthodox parts of their fur, which makes them easy to recognize when recaptured, so

photographs were taken of all those. This one has a collar of white fur beneath its throat pouch.



By 12:30 it was all over and the cleaning up began, while Stephen and Tanja checked the traps that had all dried out and were packed and rolled up into their carry bags.



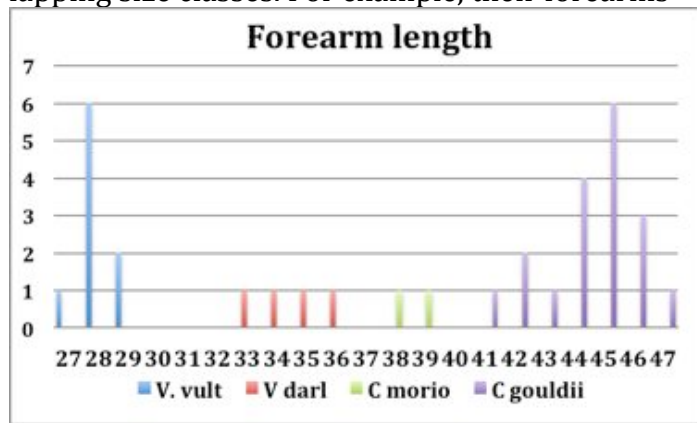
Traps 1 to 4 were along the pump-shed track, 5 to 10 along the Rosette Rock track and 11 to 15 in the creek near the Pipes.

Trap	Gould's	Choco late	Large Forest	Small Forest	Total
3	5			1	6
4	5			1	6
7	6	1	3	2	12
8				1	1
9			1		1
10	2	1		4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>
%	54.5%	6.1%	12.1%	27.3%	100%

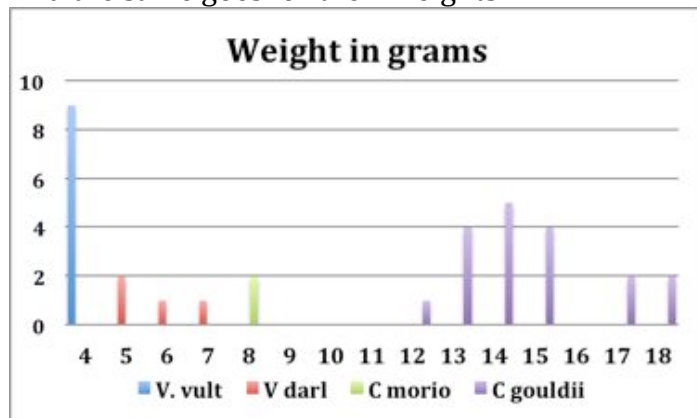
The Small Forest Bats were having a boys' convention, so we had overall more males than females.

Spec ies	Gould's	Choco late	Large Forest	Small Forest	Total
M	10	1	2	9	22
F	8	1	2		11

One of the interesting things about having four species is showing that they do not have overlapping size classes. For example, their forearms



And the same goes for their weights



In addition Tanja and Stephen had 13 Gould's males, which were banded, and 12 Freetails which Stephen PIT-tagged.

For comparison, last year, with four traps along the pump-shed track over two nights, we collected 22 bats of three species: 18 Gould's, 3 Large Forest and 1 Small Forest Bat. It was a particularly poor trapping result, per trap night and overall. This year we got more bats, but from 15 traps it was only 2 bats per trap-night, our lowest ever, mainly because it was a cool drizzly night – not good for trapping.

**Next bat box check: Sunday 7 April 7:30 a.m. Daylight Saving ends the night before**