

Organ Pipes NP bats: 8 Feb 2015

We had a fine afternoon for it, mild and windless. Stephen had one ladder and I the other. My first find was 10 Gould's in box 10, rarely used.



John Munro, who has done much bat fieldwork in the UK, joined us for an hour.



My team was Rebecca and Kristin



Then came a big group of 44 Gould's in box 9

including half-grown juveniles:



Stephen had Michael and Casey helping. You can see how many trees on the Main Flat have died (after many fell or were lopped after dying)



We had a little diversion into Glider boxes in case anybody was at home, and on the third try found this little fellow in box 3 for Rebecca to photograph



Pia took the Visitor Centre key to get the assessing team started. We found them hard at work when we

took up the last bat bags: several pairs of assessors and scribes hard at work, plus a woman and her two sons, casual park visitors, who got a long show-and-tell.



Two new recruits were Tabitha and Kristy



Casey had Rebecca to scribe and Louise worked at assessing.



Pia had her sister Lulu to help, and Anthea Gurr had brought several friends (Tabitha and Kristy)



A bit later, Rev came along and joined in assessing, watched by Pia's mother, Mary Long



Several people brought contributions to the feast, to keep the hungry workers well fed. It was all done by 7:45, so Stephen and I returned the big groups of mothers and pups to their boxes – the majority of bats, involving about 8 boxes. By then it was about dark.



Then those who had stayed enjoyed the delight of releasing bats to fly off into the night - Louise

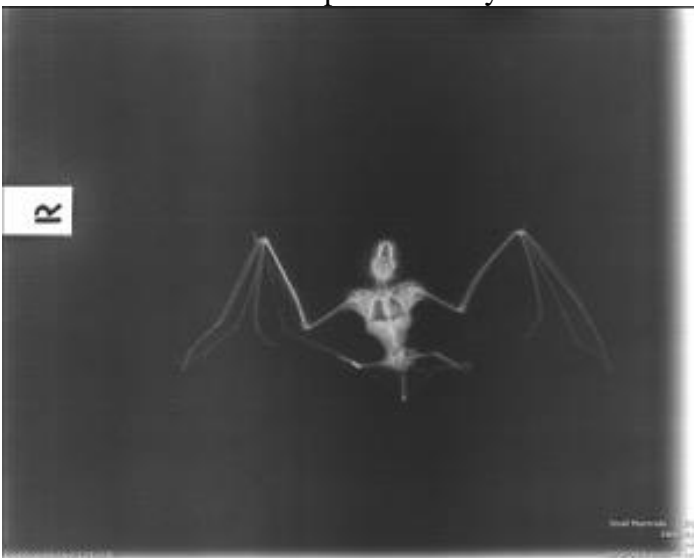


And Rebecca.

One little Gould's in box 20 was found with a broken left forearm, so was taken off to Healesville Sanctuary for the excellent veterinary service there. Franciscus Scheelings took before-and-after x-rays



The broken forearm was pinned – very delicate.



So the little male bat, banded in April 2014, will be fed on mealworms until the arm heals and he is released.

Box	Bat	Species	Adult		Juvenile		Esc
			M	F	M	F	
C07	52	Gould's	8	32	3	9	
C09	34	Gould's	7	19	4	4	3
C17	20	Gould's	3	13	2	2	
C41	17	Gould's	3	4	7	3	3
C44	13	Gould's	1	9	3		2
C10	12	Gould's	3	5	1	3	7
C20	12	Gould's	3	9			
C05	11	Gould's	1	4	2	4	20
C39	6	Gould's	1	5			5
C06	5	Gould's	2	3			15
C15	4	Gould's	2	2			
C24	3	Gould's	2	1			
C29	3	Gould's	2	1			
C42	3	Gould's		2		1	21
C32	2	Gould's		2			
C34	2	Gould's		2			1
C35	2	Gould's	1	1			
C13	1	Gould's		1			
C40	1	Gould's	1				
C43		Gould's					2
C16		Gould's					1
	203	Totals	40	115	22	26	80

There were 7 boxes each with a dead bat in them: C01, C13, C15, C20, C27, C28, C43. 5 of them had been banded in December, the other two were unbanded, juveniles probably. Life and death in a dry summer.

Each February, when the boxes are full of adolescent bats unaccustomed to our visits, we get mass flights out of boxes as the squeaky ladders approach. Many enter other boxes yet to be visited and are captured, some were captured this month as we checked boxes before replacing mothers and pups at the end of the evening. But quite a few of the 80 probably were not captured, and some of the smaller groups of bats were probably escapees from other boxes, while some joined big groups and mixed with them. So the above figures are not an accurate indication of the number of bats in each box before we arrived.

There were bats in 23 of the 38 boxes, probably a record. As so often, there was a ringtail possum in C3.

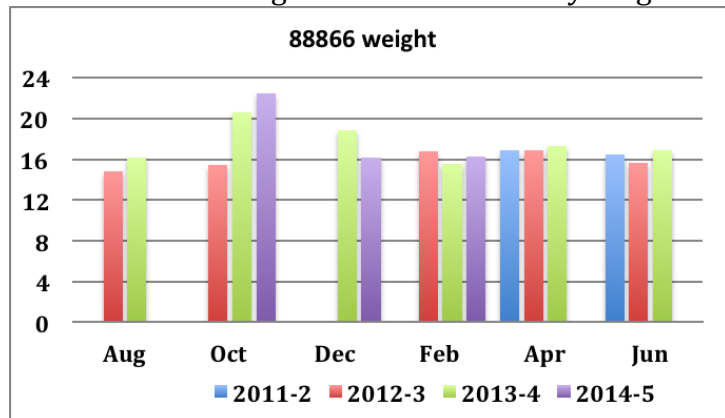
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Gould's	243	178	253	203	211
Lge Forest	10	8	10	1	
Freetail	1				
Total	254	186	263	204	211

The Gould's colony fluctuates a fair bit in Feb., but much of that is due to the escapees. Large Forest

bats seem to have a diminishing presence in the boxes.

Gould's female 88866

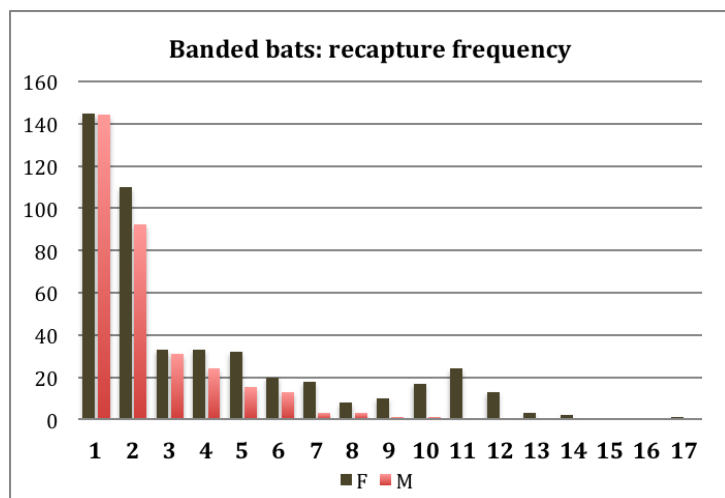
This very old female has been captured 17 out of 17 times since I took responsibility for the project, so we have a very good record of her weight fluctuation Dec. 2012 is missing as she had attached young.



She must have been closer to full term when weighed in October than last year, and dropped further in December but is remarkably good at maintaining her weight through winter months. She shows a strong preference for box C41 (used four times), but has been found to date in 12 different boxes.

Capture frequency

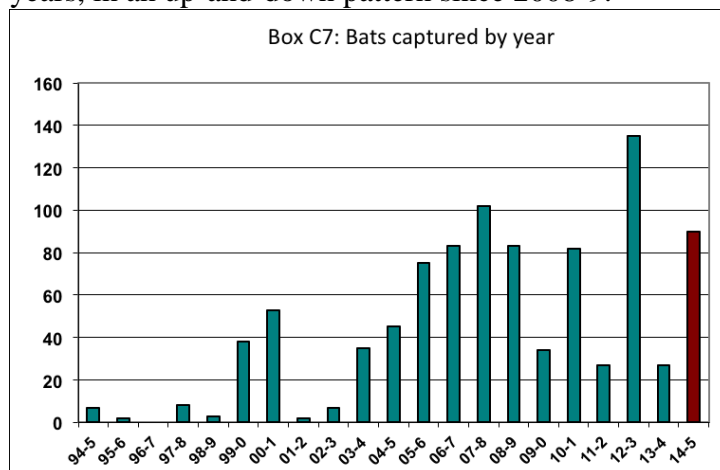
Since I started keeping records in April 2012, we have recorded 796 banded bats, 469 females and 327 males over 17 monitoring sessions. No male has been captured more often than 10 times, but 43 females have been captured from 11 to 17 times. The colony is dominated by the old females. The columns for smaller frequencies are very large as the adolescents tend to emigrate in April/May, so we capture them only 2-3 times before they leave for greener pastures.



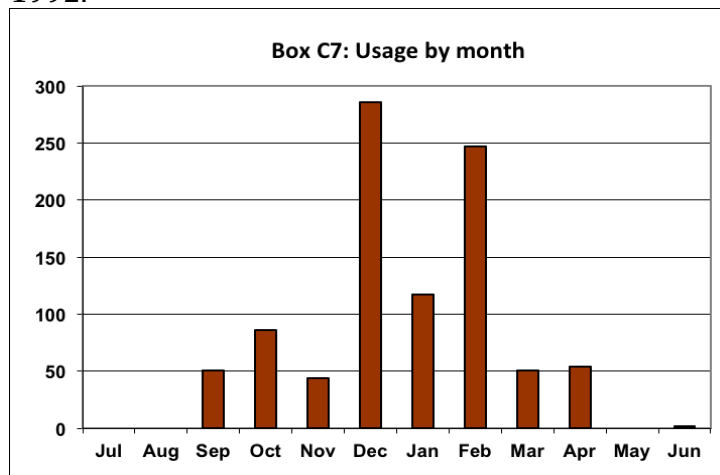
Box 7

This month's largest group of 52 bats was in C7. It has now had 938 bats found in it, so it is the most-used box

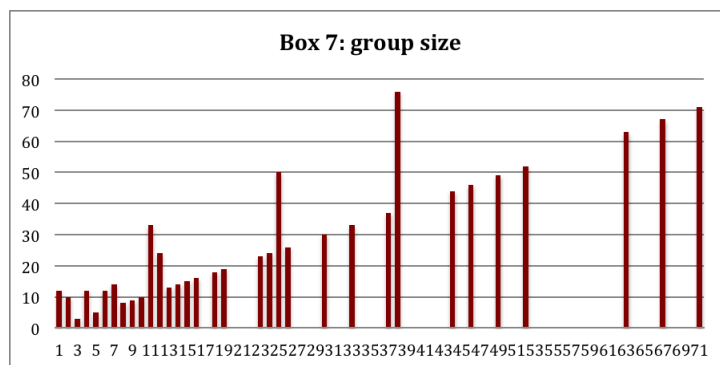
of the original 10. Usage has fluctuated wildly over the years, in an up-and-down pattern since 2008-9.



There is a very strong pattern of it being preferred as a summer roost and largely avoided in spring and autumn, almost totally avoided in winter. This is the typical pattern for the old Oregon boxes installed in 1992.



It has attracted some of the largest bat groups we have seen in any box, the largest being 71 bats in Jan. 2006, 67 in Dec. 2012 and 63 in Dec. 2007.



Next box monitoring: Sunday 19 April, 2 p.m.