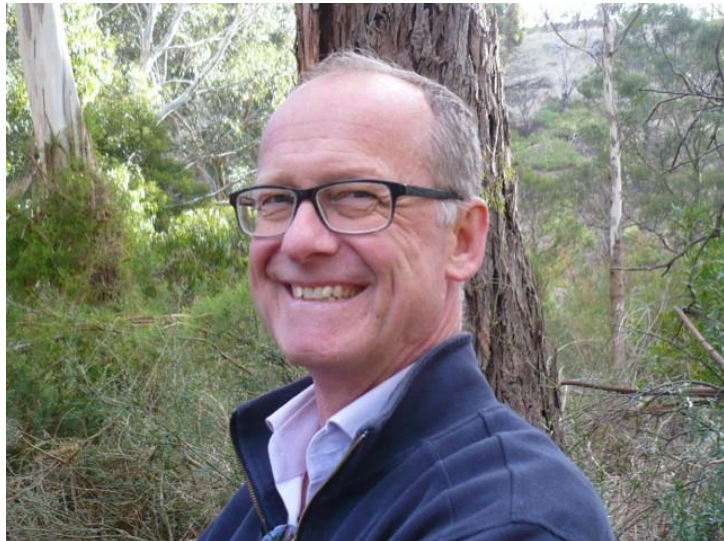


Bat box monitoring, Organ Pipes NP April 2015

We had a drizzly day, with occasional showers. Connor decided to try the harness and did much of the ladder climbing with my group, while Steve did the other end of the valley.



We had a visitor from Canberra, David Andrew, of the federal Environment Dept, on a quick visit to Melbourne.



Freetails were in 5 boxes, the biggest group in C42



David's umbrella came in handy during showers to keep bats dry. One Freetail escaped and was chased by a peregrine falcon.



There were Gould's in 16 boxes, including 10 quite large groups.



I'd forgotten the Visitor Centre key, so Robert Irvine let us into the Friends' shed (Jack Lyale's old office from 1973). Crowded but workable. Lights set up, equipment laid out and the team went to work.



There were four tables for processing. Steve chipped 13 new Freetails so we now have a total of 72.



Pia had sister Lulu to scribe for her. 82 new bats were banded. Casey was there with his parents, visiting from San Francisco.



Lindy had Pia's mother, Mary Long



Of the 257 bats processed over the evening, only one had an injury, judged to be a 3, with a band embedded in the forearm. Lindy managed to prise it off,

medicate the wounded arm and put another on the other forearm.



Lindy suggested I take a group down to start releasing while the rain held off. So a line-up of eager bat releasers opened bags, to find as usual that Freetails take their time to consider the situation.



There were 19 Large Forest bats in one box, which all flew off quickly



By the time we had released the first bunch, the last

bats had been processed, so we went down again and released them, and were all done by 9:30. That was a great improvement on the good old days when we'd sometimes finish up at 2 a.m. Having a big team of bat handlers and scribes makes a difference.

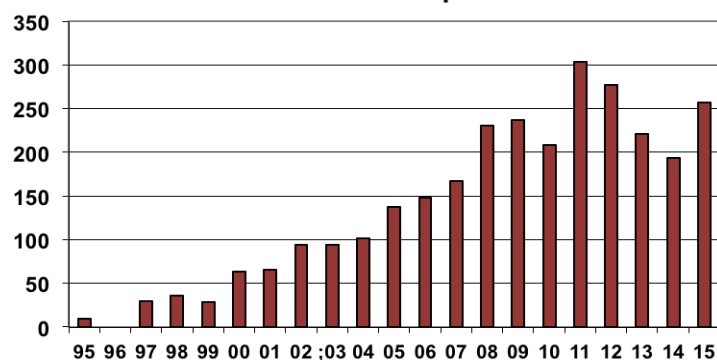
Box	Bat	Species	Adult		Esc
			M	F	
C44	32	Gould's	9	23	
C24	27	Gould's	9	18	
C30	23	Gould's	5	18	
C29	21	Gould's	1	20	
C19	19	Lge Forest	1	18	
C36	19	Gould's	10	9	
C23	17	Gould's	7	10	
C32	16	Gould's	5	11	
C28	14	Gould's		14	
C13	10	Gould's	1	9	
	1	Freetail		1	
C40	10	Gould's	1	9	
C42	9	Freetail	2	7	1
C15	8	Freetail	2	6	
C35	8	Gould's	5	3	
C05	5	Gould's	5		
C20	5	Gould's	1	4	
C17	4	Gould's	3	1	
	2	Freetail		2	
C41	3	Freetail		3	
	1	Gould's	1		
C25	2	Gould's	1	1	
C01	1	Chocolate	1		
	257	Totals	70	187	1

The total is an increase of 64 bats on last April, a mix of more Gould's, 19 Forest bats and more Freetails as well

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Gould's	251	231	217	186	214
Lge Forest	4	13			19
Freetail	28	32	8	7	23
Chocolate	2	1	1		1
Total	265	277	226	193	257

So the decline since 201 has been reversed for now.

Bats found in April

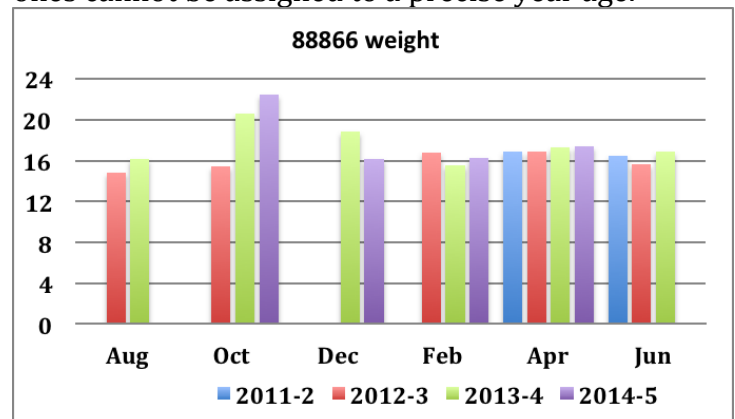


Box 44

This box was only installed in 2014 and was used almost instantly – once bats have the idea that boxes make good roosts they discover new ones very quickly. There was one bat in Dec '14, 13 in Feb. and now 32 this month.

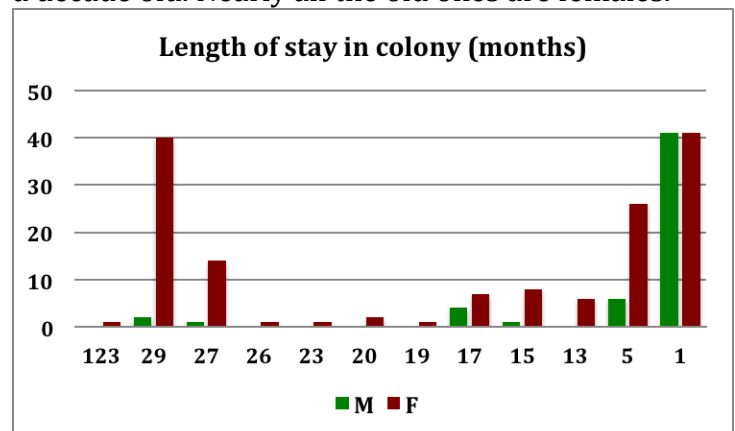
Old female Gould's 88866

She is the last of Natasha's banded Gould's, born probably Oct. 2004, so now about 10½ years old. Her weight record is very consistent, and she was pregnant again last spring, heavier than ever, so still very vigorous and healthy. She was in the new box 44 with 31 other Gould's. They seem to be a mixed-age group, with 88866 by far the oldest. The others seem to be 20 born last spring (11 F, 9 M), a solitary 2-year-old and 10 females 3 years or older. So there could be 6 or 7 generations in the one box. Because we only started banding again in Dec 2012 the older ones cannot be assigned to a precise year age.



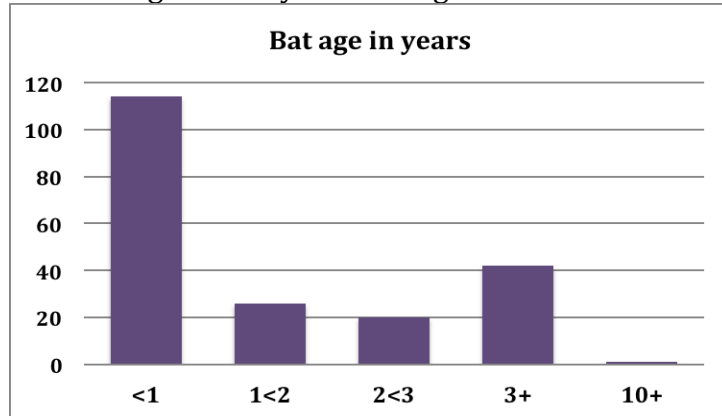
Colony structure

Looking at the number of months since a bat was banded shows they are a mix of ages, some clearly young of this breeding season which may have involved two successive litters by some Gould's, some are between 1 and 2 years old, and one is over a decade old. Nearly all the old ones are females.



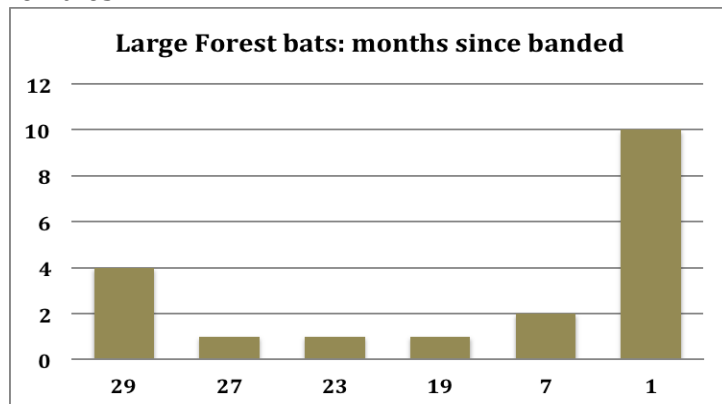
Summarising that into age in years, there were 114 young bats, newly arrived at adulthood from birth last spring, 26 over one year old, including probably

some immigrants that dispersed from other birth colonies, another 20 between 2 and 3 years, and 42 at least 3 years old. Again, as we only started banding in Dec '12, we don't know how to divide them into bats aged 3, 4, 5 or more years old. The only securely dated one is 88866 who is over 10 years. So there may be some 9, 8, 7 etc. years old in the 42 older bats. We'll have a clearer idea of the age structure of the colony in another 5 years or so when we have a longer history of banding.

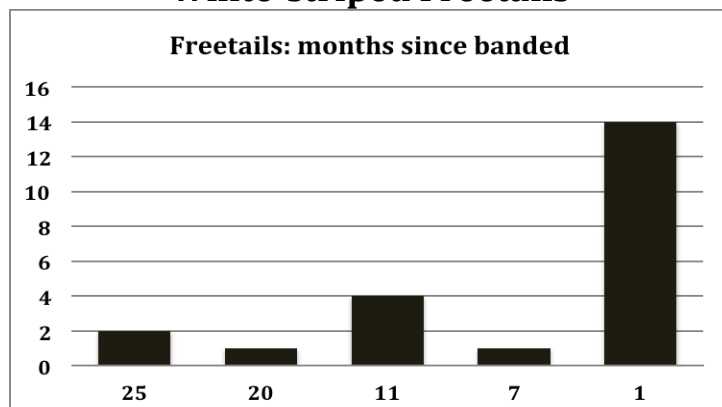


Large Forest bats

There is a similar structure among the Forest bats. Of the 19, 10 must be this year's young, 7 are from last year, 3 are probably 2-year-olds and the last 4 3+ years. Again, a mixed-age group. The only male was banded this month. All the older ones are females.



White-striped Freetails



Of the 23 Freetails, 14 were micro-chipped this month, including all 3 males; 1 in Oct '14, 4 in Jun '14, 1 in Sep '13 and 2 in Apr 1. One is a mystery and was a retrap in Oct '14, but of unknown origin.

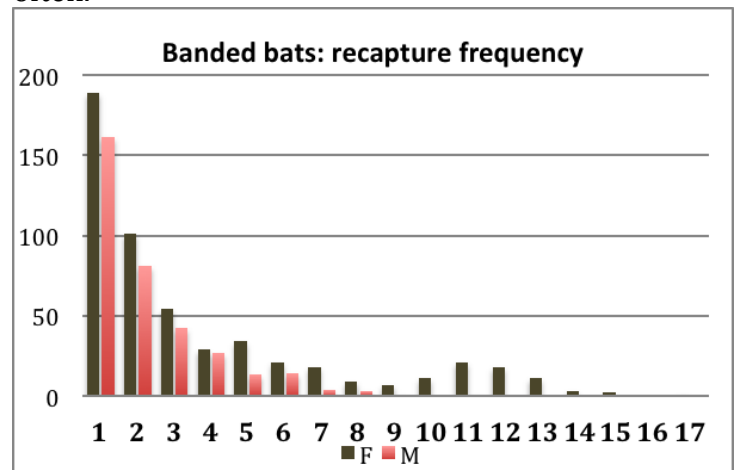
17 of the 23 were assessed as post-lactating females with only 2 prepartous, so our boxes seem to be a post-breeding holiday camp for mothers needing a recuperation time after an intensive childcare period. One female, chipped in Apr '13, has now been captured 5 times, so is a regular user of our boxes, always appearing April to August, never during the breeding season. Another female, now captured 4 times (not this month) has been in a box twice in April, twice in December, so has different habits.

Chocolate Wattled Bat

We've now had four of them, once each in Mar, Apr Sep 2013, and now in Apr 2015, 1 female and 3 males.

Recapture frequency

All the bats recaptured 12 or more times are female. Males don't seem to stay in the colony as long or as often.



Next box check: Sunday 14 June 2 p.m.

The team this month was: Lindy Lumsden, Stephen Griffiths, Pia Lentini, Lulu Lentini, Mary Long, Casey Visintin, parents Frank and Sandy, Rebeca and John O'Keefe, Emily Laurie, Simone Pancpinto (photographer), Connor van Doorn, Rachel McIntosh, Lynne McAlister, Fernanda Triana and me.

Simone set up a beautiful set of photos on his website. Wonderful record of our day:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/124310560@N08/sets/72157651610834947/>