

Bats at Organ Pipes, 17 November



Steve wanted to take genetic samples from this season's newborn Gould's pups, having sampled the ones at Latrobe Uni the previous day and found the females all still pregnant. Four of us (Melissa Walker and Angela Walsh) drove out to the park in the morning and checked boxes known to have maternity groups recently.



It turned out that many of the Gould's females had indeed given birth, probably this week. The newborns were all unfurred and wrinkly, clinging firmly to mum.



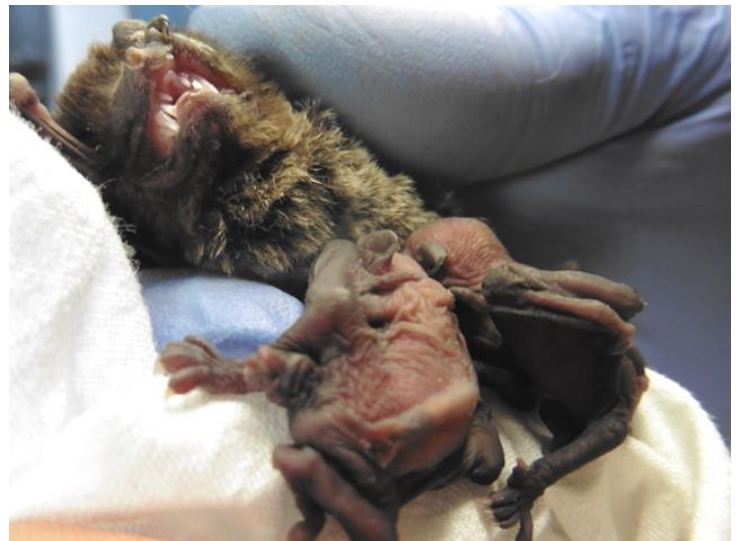
Steve already had several bags of bats when I arrived. He went off to the visitor Centre with Angela to start the slow task of processing, while Melissa and I checked a few more boxes.



Steve set up his light box, with Angela labeling vials and Melissa managing the laptop records.



One or two bats had given birth perhaps a fortnight ago, and quite a few were still in advanced pregnancy. Those were left in the boxes. One mother was 88866:



She must now be a 10-year-old, but still vigorous and into breeding, just as she was as a 2-year-old – photo by Melissa.



Steve took tail membrane samples from both pups, and microchipped the mothers, assisted by Melissa.



Steve gave me the job of rewarding the Gould's mothers with a feed of mealworms, which they licked up greedily.



A casual park visitor peeped through the door, saw we

were busy, then withdrew. I went out to invite him in to see what we were doing and, to my amazement, recognized him as Bob Fergus, who was science teacher at my school, and my form teacher, the year I matriculated in 1962. Haven't seen him since then. Now 81, retired 26 years ago, and just happened to be visiting the park with his wife when I happened to be in the VC.



Melissa has just been accepted to do Honours next year.



Angela has just completed 3rd year and hopes to get into Honours, too.

Next month when we check all the boxes, no doubt all the other female Gould's, now near full-term pregnancy will have attached young, and today's mothers will have fully-furred young starting to become independent

Next box check: Sunday 13 December 2 p.m.