

## Bat box check, Organ Pipes, 14 August

August is the low-point for the year in occupancy of bat boxes (apart from 2013, when there were 202 bats), so under 100 were expected. As usual I did the south end and Steve did the north end. Box 14 had 6 Gould's



Another few boxes had small numbers, then a big group of Freetails and Gould's were found in box 13



Most boxes were empty, so after a few show-and-tell



chats to passing casual visitors, we all drove up to the Visitor Centre, where a small team was already at work.



Lindy was assisted by Juliana Lazzari



Steve, who has a new baby at home, stayed to process the Freetails, then went off to be father Steve.



Pia and Mary, Danielle and Melissa, stayed to finish off the 75 bats collected from the boxes. Andrew Mibus had just completed his vaccinations, and asked to be trained as a bat-handler, so made first steps in the long

process of growing confidence, learning to hold a bat, manage the calipers, read a band number.



Among the 75 was just one Large Forest Bat male, banded in June 2015, and now captured for the 4<sup>th</sup> time.

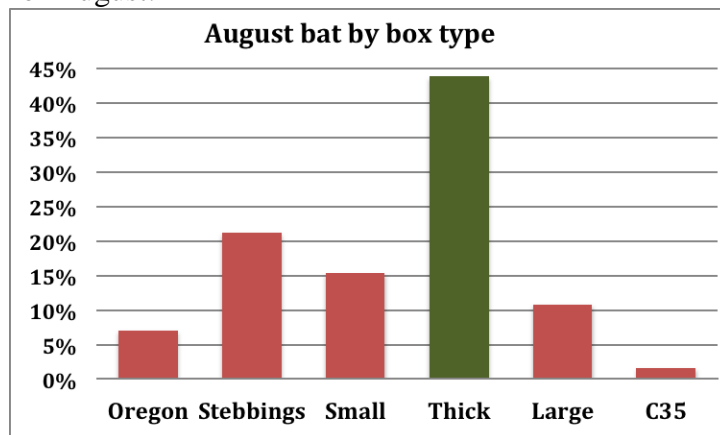


They were all done by dusk, so after enjoying a beautiful sunset, four of us went down into the valley to release the bats, which all flew off quite fast.



Box	Bat	Species	Adult	
			M	F
C33	35	Gould's	6	29
C13	7	Gould's	3	4
	8	Freetail		8
C30	9	Gould's	1	8
C14	6	Gould's	1	5
C16	5	Gould's	2	3
C22	2	Gould's		2
C20	1	Gould's		1
C25	1	Gould's	1	
C17	1	Lge Forest	1	
	75	Totals	15	60

All the Freetails were post-lactating females, as usual, and the Gould's included 52 females and 14 males, a ratio of 3.7 to 1, about normal for August. As it is winter, nearly all the bats were either in the thick-walled boxes (58.7%) or the standard Stebbings boxes (49.3%). That fits fairly well with the long-term pattern for August:



The biggest group was in box 33, which also happened in June. For several years this box had big problems with ant invasions, but now seems to have recovered its status as a bat box.

As usual it is fluctuations in the number of Gould's that determines the total bat catch.

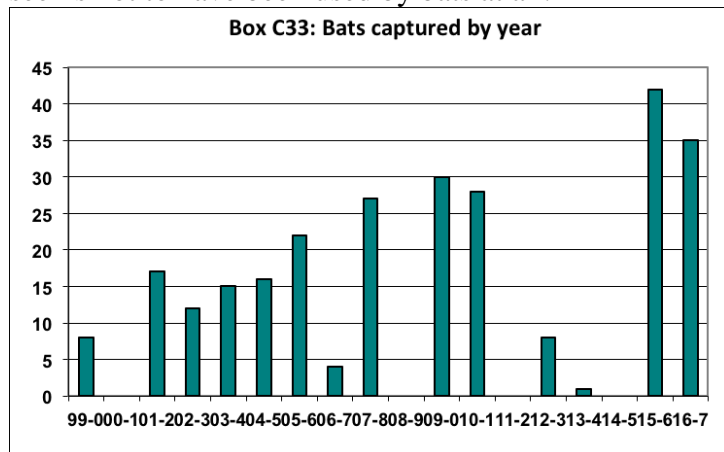
Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Gould's	101	196	52	87	66
Lge Forest		2	2		1
Freetail	1	3	5	1	8
Chocolate		1		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Gould's %</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>80%</b>

### Box 33

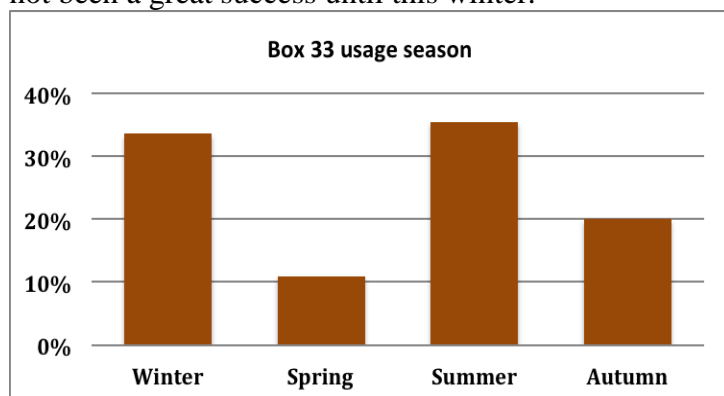
The box was installed in Sep 1999, has had a troubled history, falling from its tree in Nov 2002 and being



plagued by ants much of its life, so it is one of the least-used thick-walled boxes, with a record of only 265 bats in its 17 years, as against 910 for C30. Some years it seems not to have been used by bats at all.

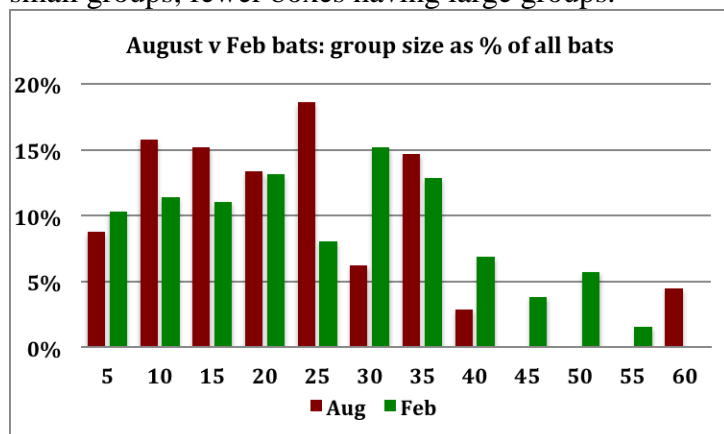


It was intended as a winter roost but has been most intensively used in summer, possibly because the ants leave it alone in the drier months. This winter it had 40 in June and now another 35, so as a winter box it has not been a great success until this winter.



### Group size

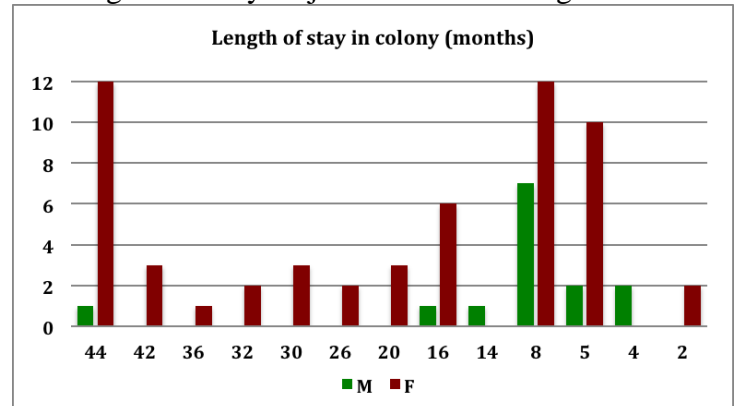
This month all boxes had fewer than 10 bats except C13 that had the Freetails and some Gould's, and C33 that had 35 Gould's. For August in general, group sizes are overall smaller than in summer, more boxes having small groups, fewer boxes having large groups.



Almost all the really big groups are found in summer when females are with the young born in spring.

## Community structure

Nearly all the male bats were under a year old, with just one male (92343) having been banded in Dec 2012. He has been captured now 7 times, twice each in April, June and August, which means he is absent during the birthing and lactating season and drops in during the breeding season. In 2015 he was captured in April, June and Aug. and this year just in June and Aug.



The 12 females banded in Dec. 2012 have been captured from 17 to 23 times, and are present in the boxes far more often than male 92343.

We have checked the boxes 24 times since Dec 2012. Two females, 92336 and 92337 have been present 23 times, and 92393 has been there 22 times. As there was no banding for about 7 years prior to Dec 2012, these 12 females are almost certainly a mix of ages, 2 or 3 having been recruited to the long-term breeding population each year. Quite possibly 92336 and 92337 are the oldest, perhaps now 10 years old.

So the community this month comprised 13 "old bats", 4+ years, 6 banded in 2013, 7 in 2014, 8 in 2015 and 35 young bats banded Dec 2015 or later.

### Freetails

The 8 Freetails were all post-lactating females, varying in weight from 35.2 to 39.5 gm., and in forearm length from 57.8 to 63 ml. So all within a narrow range. We rarely find any but post-lactating females. One of them, 7633B33 has now been captured 5 times, so this seems part of her regular home range. She was PIT tagged in June 2014, then found again in April 2015, and now 3 times in a row, in April, June and August this year. Another female Freetail was PIT-tagged at the same time but we have seen her only 3 times, so Organ Pipes seems less important a part of her life.

**Next box check: Sunday 9 October 2 p.m.**

Don't forget to check Pia's website:

<https://batboxes.wordpress.com/>