

Bats, Organ Pipes NP, 29 April 2017

We had another fine windless day, and a big team came to help empty boxes, several undergraduate students. Bridal Creeper out of control all over Main Flat.



As well as the usual Gould's there were Freetails in four boxes – this is C42, one of the large boxes.



And our first glider nest (with gliders growling at me) in C43,, so I left them alone.



With three ladders going, we got the boxes emptied by 2 p.m., meanwhile Pia and Lindy started a processing team in the VC.



Two new recruits were Luke Johnson and Caitlin Surrey, Conservation students at VUT, both vaccinated and eager to start learning bat-handling skills.



Casey, about to submit his PhD thesis, was there as usual with Anita.



And their scribe was a new recruit, Dylan Piscopo.



Many of the Freetails were first-time captures, so Steve was kept busy PIT-tagging them, set up by the window.



The team slowly dwindled as students wandered off to other events, and a small team did the last few bats, finishing up about 7:30 p.m.



Lindy, Pia, Andrew and I stayed to release the 287 bats, with about 40 bats to open and empty. One Freetail was reluctant to fly away, so I set it on my cap until it was ready to go, and it flapped off.

Box	Bat	Species	Adult		Juvenile	
			M	F	M	F
C46	33*	Gould's	18	15		
	16	Lge Forest	7	9		
C45	34	Gould's	11	22	1	
C34	24	Gould's	13	11		
C36	21	Gould's	10	11		
C40	17	Gould's	3	14		
C39	17	Gould's	1	13		3
C41	16	Gould's	6	7	2	1
C01	13	Gould's	3	10		
C03	13#	Gould's	10	2		
C42	13	Freetail	1	12		
C28	12	Gould's	1	11		
C30	12	Gould's		12		
C35	9	Gould's	1	8		
C17	8	Freetail	2	6		
	1	Gould's	1			
C13	6	Freetail	2	3		1
C27	5*	Gould's	1	4		
C15	4	Freetail		4		
	1	Gould's	1			
C20	4	Gould's	1	3		
C22	3	Gould's		3		
C16	2#	Gould's	2			
C24	2	Gould's	1	1		
C07	1	Gould's	1			
C14	1	Freetail		1		
C44	1	Gould's	1			
	289	Totals	98	182	3	5

* = 1 escaped # = 1 dead (both were adolescents)
 One surprise was the presence of 8 sub-adults and juveniles, from this summer's second breeding, and another was finding bats in 24 of the boxes. The two new multi-chambered boxes Stephen installed last year (45 & 46) were the most popular this month, with 83 bats between

them. It is also difficult to extract the bats; the chambers are too narrow for a human hand to be inserted.

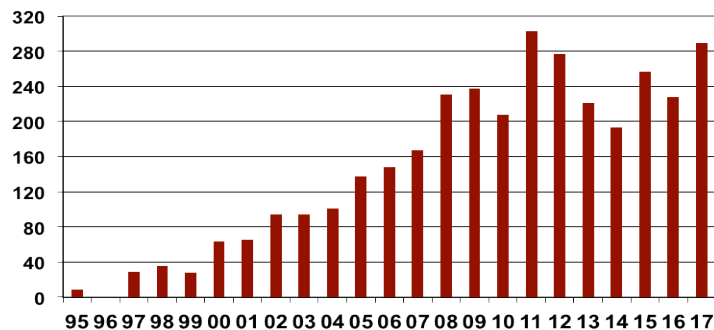
April bats

This is a record year for the April catch, all three species having increased well above 2016 levels, though in 2011 there were 251 Gould's, 10 more than this year.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Gould's	217	186	214	212	241
Lge Forest			19	1	16
Freetail	8	7	23	15	32
Chocolate	1		1		
Total	226	193	257	228	289
Gould's %	96%	96%	83%	93%	83%

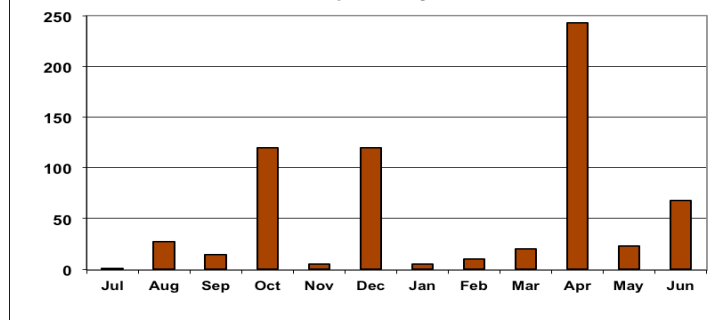
Counting escapees there were a few more in 2011, but the decline to 2014 has now been reversed.

Bats found in April



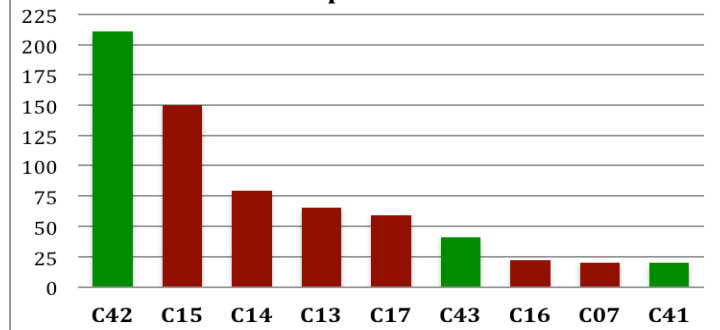
Freetails in April

Freetails captured by month



April continues to be the main season in which Freetails are found in our boxes, mainly post-lactating mothers having a bit of time off between breeding seasons.

Freetails' preferred roosts



They have been found in 15 of our 42 boxes, but over 94% were in a small range of the standard and large

boxes. They really like C42, and most of the bigger groups have been in that box.

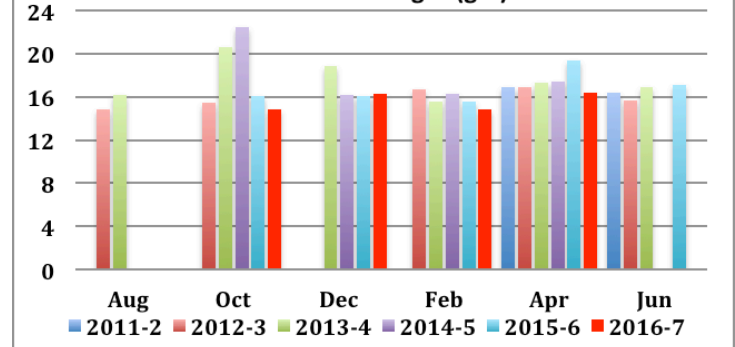
Old Gould's female 88866

Our oldest bat is still going strong, though a little lighter than last year each month except Dec.



She is probably now about 12 years old, and by her weight seems to have retired from breeding in the past two years.

88866 weight (gm)



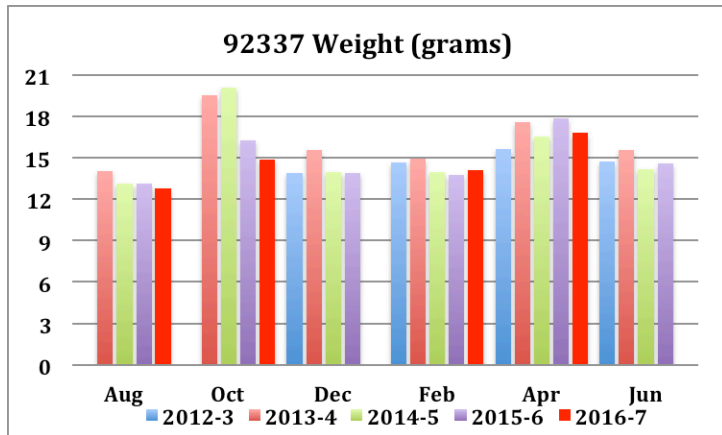
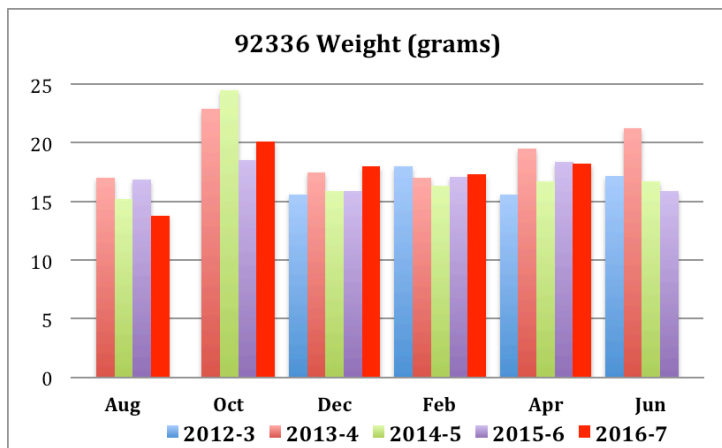
Old male Gould's 92343

The only male banded in Dec '12 to be still with us, he has now been captured 8 times, usually on annual visits during the April mating season, but last year from Aug to Dec.

Old female Gould's 92336 and 92337

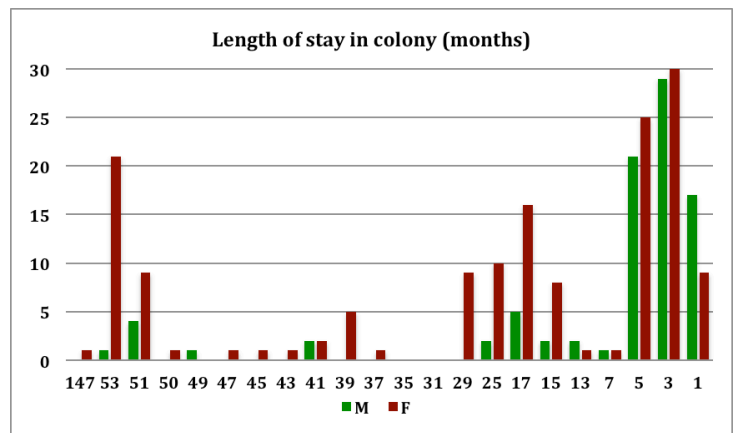
These two were also banded in Dec. '12, and seem to be great friends, as they have been found in the same box together 13 times of the 27 captures to date. Both were lactating when banded in Dec. '12 so were mature breeding females. We have no idea whether this was their first breeding season or their fifth. They might be sisters, or mother-and-daughter.

They have both been captured almost every monitoring session, so we have excellent weight records for both. 92336 is consistently markedly heavier than 92337, an average of 16% heavier (2.4 gm), but ranging from parity to 35% heavier in October last year.



Community structure

Because it is mating season, there were more mature males in the boxes than other months, but still the usual mix of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 year-old bats and last summer's young bats that still have not dispersed.



Something new I thought I'd examine is whether this age mix works within each box that had a big group in it. Almost every box with a group of 10+ bats had one or more banded in Dec 2012 or Feb 2013, so the colony's elders, plus 3, 2 and 1 year-old bats and a bunch of adolescents. The only exceptions were the boxes with the Freetails and Large Forest bats. So my perception that bats segregate by age, with adolescents groups and grandmother groups is incorrect this month. (see spreadsheet below)

The team

This month we had Steve, Lindy, Danielle, Pia, Casey, Anita, Caroline, Andrew, and new recruits Tao Lee, Luke Johnson, Caitlin Surrey, Steven Porter, Dylan Piscopo, Jarod Mamo, Dale Mamo, Stefano Sergio, Maricar Benzon, and me. Thanks to all for a great day's effort.

Next box check: Sunday 18 June 12 noon

				05	12	13											14						15						16						17
				F	D	F	M	A	J	S	O	D	F	A	J	O	D	A	J	O	D	F	A	O	D	F	A								
Box	Species	Box																																	
C01	Gould's	13	13			1							1				1	1			1					3	3	2							
C03	Gould's	13	13									1														3	6	3							
C28	Gould's	12	12		4	2											1	1			2	2													
C30	Gould's	12	12		4	1			1									1			1	1			2		1								
C34	Gould's	24	24		1	1					1	1	1					1			1		1		5	5	6								
C36	Gould's	21	21	1	2	2											1	2				1	1		3	7	1								
C39	Gould's	17	16		1		1			1							1	1				1			3	5	2								
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C46	Lge Forest	16	16															1	1	1						1	12								
C46	Gould's	33	33		2	1						1						2			2				10	13	2								