

Bats, Organ Pipes NP 13 Aug 2017

We had a fine day, started at noon, and found two large groups of bats – photo of 40 Gould's in C33. The park was very busy with casual visitors, so we had much show-and-tell. Bridal Creeper everywhere on Main Flat.



Peeked into glider box 7 and found a Brushtail!



The processing team had already started, with many visitors



Emily continued show-and-tell to eager young visitors.



All were welcome to watch bat assessing in progress.



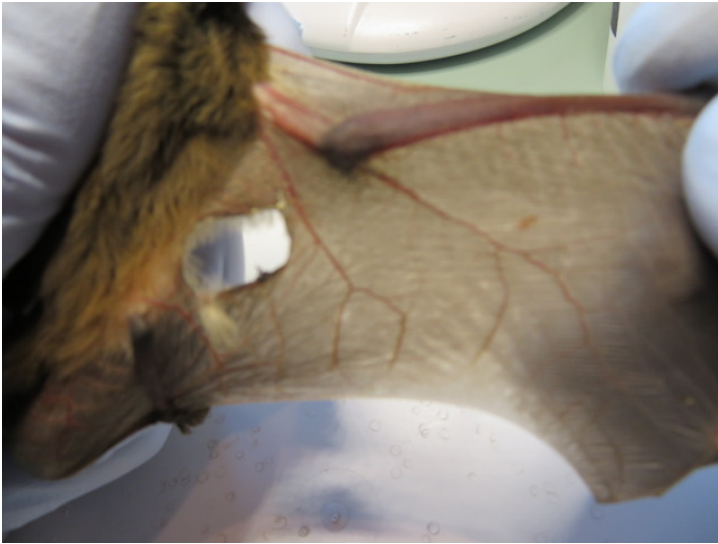
Anita had Bethany Seitz as scribe – a new recruit.



Paul Bertuch again brought a mini-busload of his Conservation students up from Frankston. Some scribed, and all learned much from their afternoon with us. There were only 88 bats, so it was all over by 4:30. Several of the new recruits seemed eager to return for more bat monitoring days.



Steve found one young Gould's, PIT-tagged last December, with a large tear in its right wing. We'll see in October whether it has healed.



Everyone but Andrew and I went off home once the VC was tidied up and all gear packed into cars. We had two hours until dark, so enjoyed a stroll around the Pipes, watching the shadows creep up the basalt wall.



Andrew got into doing some weeding, pulling out Fleabane and Spear thistles. There's a big patch of Hemlock

by the creek below the Pipes. Very toxic weed.



Half a dozen times, a very relaxed fox strolled past us, nose to ground, sniffing out dinner.



A group of ravens remained very active, flying about and cawing, until it was quite dark. Just as we were about to release bats, three dusk visitors came along and joined in – two of them Uni. Melb. science students who know Pia.



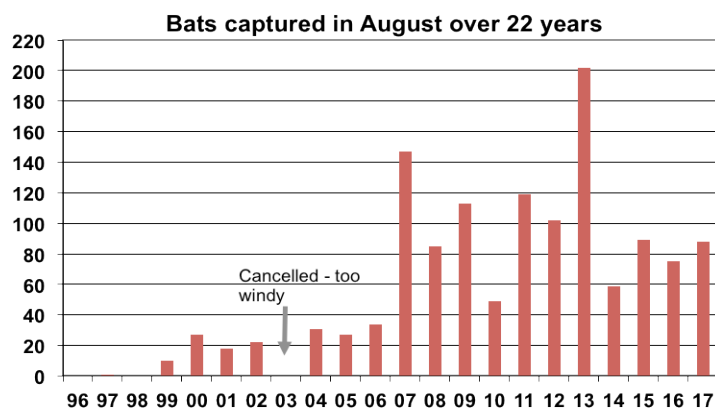
All the bats flew off quickly, and home we went.

Box	Bat	Species	Adult	
			M	F
C33	40	Gould's	10	30
C36	16	Gould's	8	8
C47	13	Gould's	3	10
	1	Lge Forest	1	
C46	2	Gould's	1	1
	5	Lge Forest	1	4
C03	7	Gould's	3	4
C20	2	Gould's	1	1
C32	1	Gould's		1
C17	1	Gould's		1*
	88	Totals	28	60

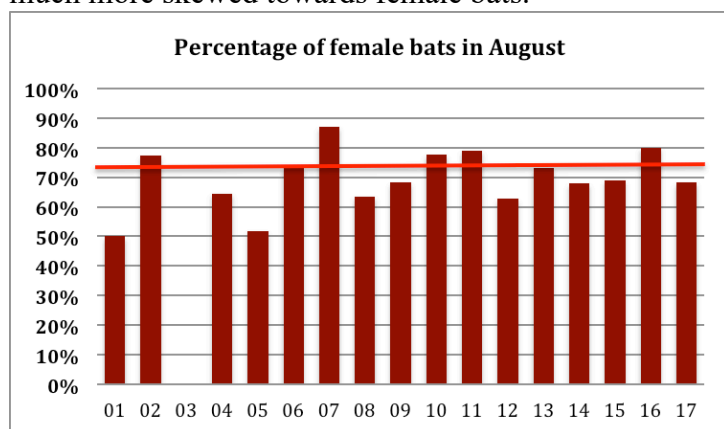
* dead

August bats

Prior to 2007 August captures were very few, then in 2007 something startling happened and the catch has been much larger ever since, though very variable.



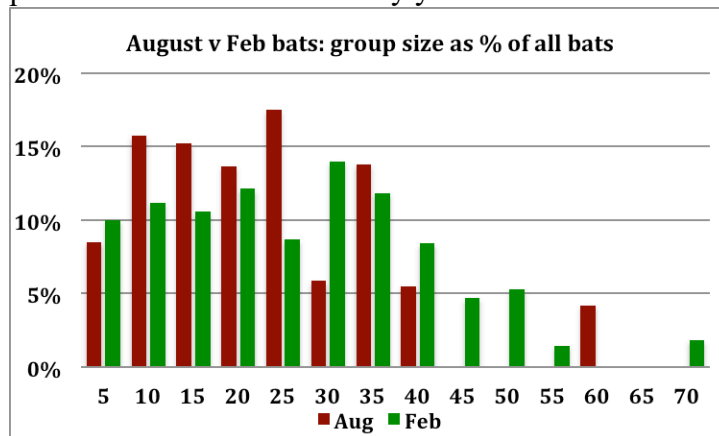
The percentage of female bats in August has been very steady at around 70%, but will shift in October to be much more skewed towards female bats.



Group size

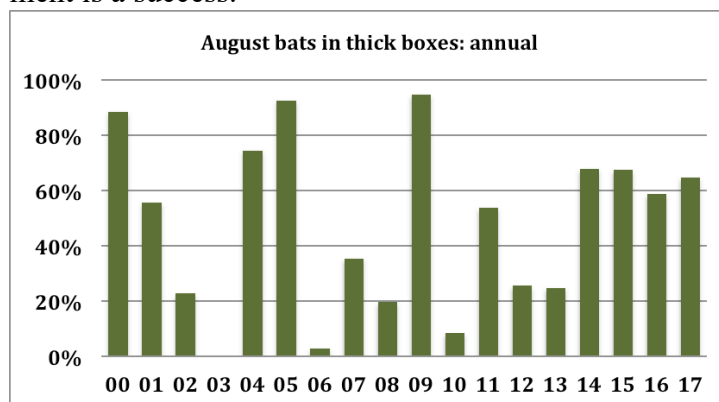
It is late winter, almost spring, and the group size is showing signs of the return of spring, but still makes a strong contrast with summer when we find very large maternity groups. In February we get on average 2.5 times the number of bats, and more of them are in bigger groups, fewer in small groups. The expansion and contraction of group size with the seasons is a

phenomenon we observe every year.



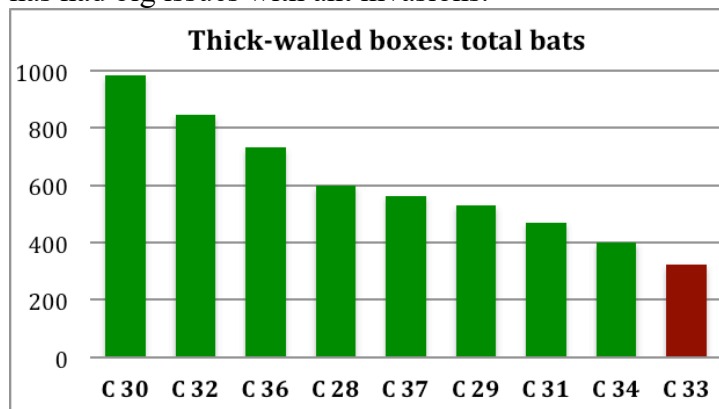
Winter boxes

From 1998 we installed 9 boxes made of timber 45 mm thick, following the example of UK where boxes made of 100 mm timber were set up for bats to hibernate in. Until then we'd check the boxes in winter and find them all empty. For a long time their main use at Organ Pipes was in autumn and spring, like all the other boxes, with bats preferring these boxes some winters, and others not. But in recent years it has settled down into a pattern, with the majority of winter bats using these thick-walled boxes. So after 20 years, the experiment is a success.

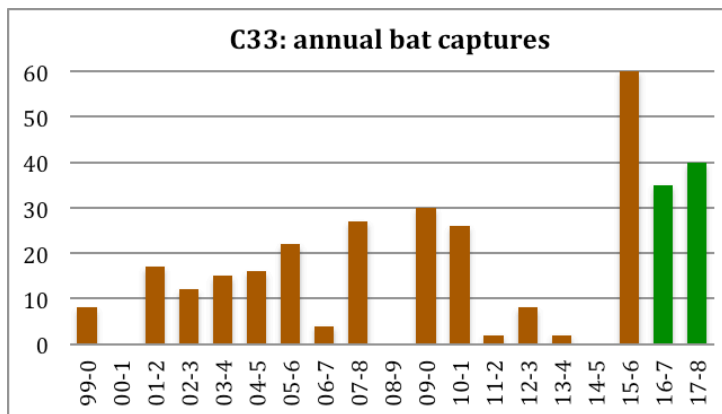


Box 33

Of the nine thick-walled boxes, this one has been the least-used (324 bats to date against 983 for C30) as it has had big issues with ant invasions.



But our battle with the ants seems to be working, and this month C33 had the largest group of 40 Gould's.



The last three years it has been used far more, as the ants have given up, and it is now on a different tree, without an ant colony cruising up and down looking for dry spaces to establish a nest. All of last year's bats for this box were found in August, so it may be developing a pattern of being an August box.

Large Forest Bats (*Vespadelus darlingtoni*)

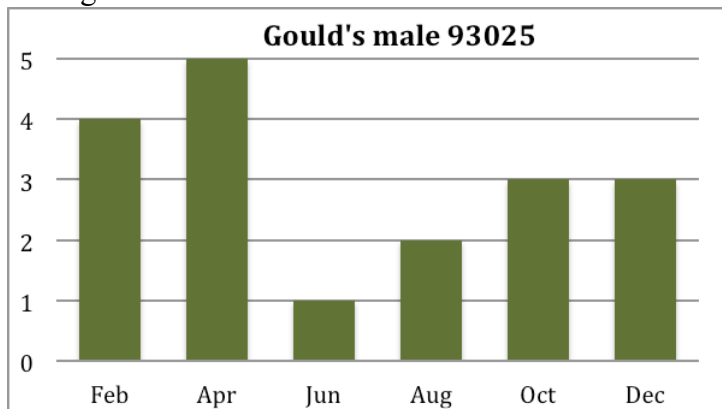
Six of this month's bats were of this species. One of them, a female, band 16862, was banded at our first banding in Dec 2012, and we've now found her 7 times. 3 times in October, twice in April, and this is the first time in August. So our boxes are not quite home, but are familiar territory. One male was banded in June '16, all the others this year, in April and June.

24 of this species were banded in Dec 2012, and only two seem to be still with us: 16860 captured in June, and 16862 this month. But they use our boxes at such long intervals, that it is possible one of the four bats not seen since Oct 2015 may reappear some time.

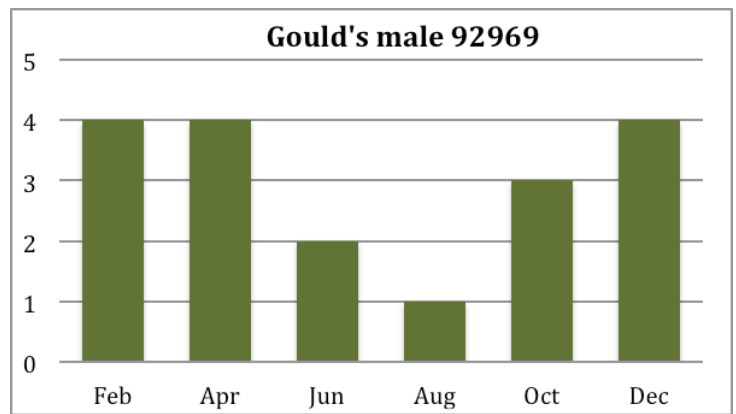
Old Gould's males

Three of the Gould's males captured this month were banded in 2013, two in Feb., one in Dec. Two have been captured 18 times now.

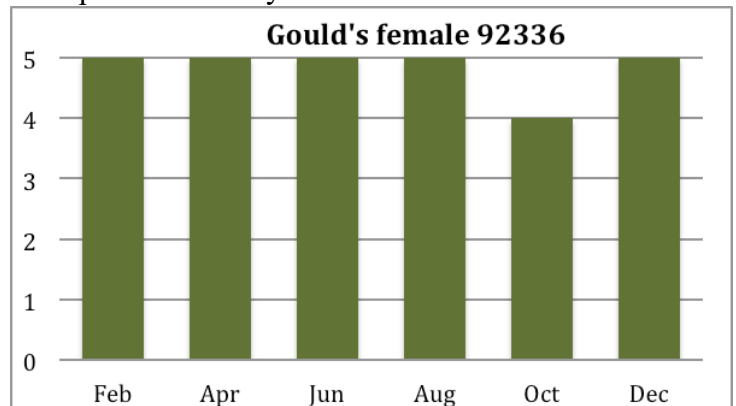
93025 appears most often in April and Feb., around mating season.



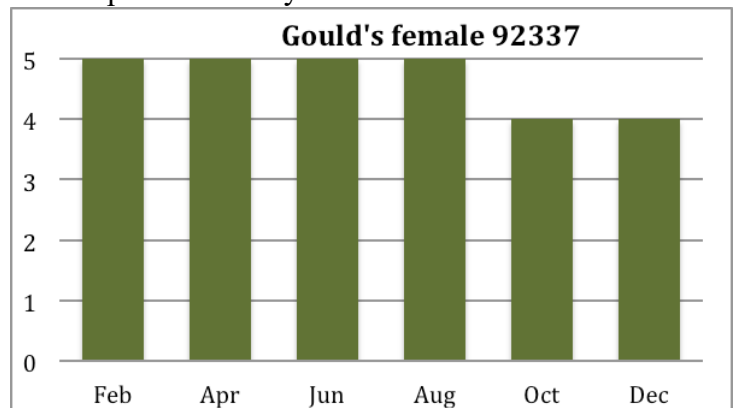
Male 92969 was banded in Dec 2013 and has also been captured 18 times, again mainly from October to April. This is his first August in a box.



By contrast, our two most frequently captured females, 92336 and 92337 have never been absent. Since Dec. 2012 there have been 29 box checks and 92336 has been present at every one.



92337 was absent last December, but otherwise has been captured at every box check.



Seems to me this shows that the "territory owners" are the females, with the males dropping in at mating season and, less often, in spring.

Next box check: Sunday 8 October 12 noon