

Pteropodidae

Fruit Bats



Epomophorus crypturus

Peters's epauletted fruit bat

Genus: *Epomophorus* **Family:** Pteropodidae

Description

Epomophorus crypturus is a large bat with a mass of about 100g. The fur is a light sandy-brown and the underparts are slightly paler. Adult males are much larger than the females and may be distinguished by the presence of shoulder epaulettes. These epaulettes are pockets containing long white fur that can be erected to display prominent white shoulder patches. At rest, these patches disappear as the fur is retracted back into the pocket. The ears have a patch of white fur at their base. The muzzle is dog-like.

Distribution

This species is widespread and abundant in the eastern parts of central and southern Africa.

Ecology

Diet

Epomophorus crypturus feeds on a wide variety of fruit and flowers, with figs apparently being favoured.

Reproduction

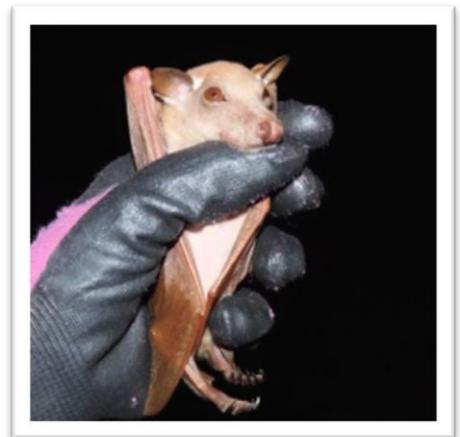
Pregnant females have been recorded throughout most of the year, with a peak in the presence of juveniles in September, suggesting that births mainly occur at the start of the wet season. One or rarely two young are born.

Roosting behaviour

They roost singly or in small groups in the dense foliage of a large, leafy tree.

Status

Least concern



Epomophorus labiatus

Little epauletted fruit bat

Genus: *Epomophorus* **Family:** Pteropodidae

Description

Epomophorus labiatus is a medium-sized bat with a light sandy-brown pelage. The underparts are slightly paler than the upper parts. Males have shoulder epaulettes which are pockets containing long, white fur that can be erected to display prominent white shoulder patches. At rest, these patches disappear as the fur is retracted back into the pocket. The ears have a white patch of fur at their base. The muzzle is dog-like.

Distribution

This species is widespread in Malawi and northeast Zambia. It has also been found in north-western Mozambique along the shores of Lake Malawi.

Ecology

Diet

No information on diet or foraging is available for southern Africa.

Reproduction

It is thought that this species breeds throughout the year.

Roosting behaviour

E. labiatus has been documented roosting in banana trees.

Status

Least concern



Epomophorus wahlbergi

Wahlberg epauletted fruit bat

Genus: *Epomophorus* **Family:** Pteropodidae

Description

Epomophorus wahlbergi is a large bat with a light sandy-brown pelage and the underparts are slightly paler than the upper parts. Males have shoulder epaulettes which are pockets containing long, white fur that can be erected to display prominent white shoulder patches. At rest, these patches disappear as the fur is retracted back into the pocket. The ears have a white patch of fur at their base. The muzzle is dog-like.



Distribution

E. wahlbergi is widespread and abundant in the eastern parts of the region, where it has been recorded from the Eastern Cape, through KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland to Mozambique, eastern Zimbabwe, Zambia and western Angola, but it is absent from Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and the western two-thirds of South Africa

Ecology**Diet**

This species feeds on fruit, nectar, pollen and flowers. Fruits include a variety of cultivated and indigenous tree species, however figs appear to be favoured

Reproduction

Young are born throughout the year, but with peaks in the winter and summer months. Breeding males have particularly long epaulette hairs and will sing from traditional sites to attract females. One or sometimes two young are born at a time, after a gestation period of five to six months.

Roosting behaviour

E. wahlbergi roosts singly or in small groups in the dense foliage of a large, leafy tree

Status

Least concern

Lissonycteris goliath

Harrison's soft-furred fruit bat

Genus: *Lissonycteris* **Family:** Pteropodidae

Description

Lissonycteris goliath is a medium-sized fruit bat endemic to southern Africa with a variable pelage ranging from reddish-brown to grey-brown; the fur on the underparts is paler and shorter.

Adult males are similar in size to females, but have a broad frontal ruff extending from the sides of the neck across the throat and the upper chest. These hairs are long and arise from glands, giving the hairs a sticky feel.

Distribution

Lissonycteris goliath is endemic to southern Africa, originally believed to only occur in the highlands of eastern Zimbabwe and central Mozambique, until ABC's discovery of a roost in the Shire highlands of Malawi.

Habitat

L. goliath is associated with forest edge habitats and has been netted in riparian locations.



Ecology**Diet**

In Zimbabwe, *Lissonycteris goliath* has been observed to feed on *Ficus* spp.

Reproduction

No reproductive information is available.

Roosting behaviour

Besides the roost that ABC discovered in southern Malawi, nothing else is known about its roosting habits in southern Africa, as all the specimens collected to date have been netted. The roost ABC discovered was in the roof of an old colonial building. The closely related *L. angolensis* roosts in hollow trees or at the entrance to caves.

Status

Vulnerable

Rousettus aegyptiacus

Egyptian rousette

Genus: *Rousettus* **Family:** Pteropodidae

Description

Rousettus aegyptiacus is a large fruit bat with a slate-brown to dark brown upper body and paler underparts with a contrasting buffy or yellowish collar around the throat.

Distribution

The subspecies *leachii* is widespread in the eastern parts of the region, occurring from Cape Town in the extreme southwest of South Africa, east and north along the coast to KwaZulu-Natal. There is a gap in its distribution in Swaziland and southern Mozambique, with records re-appearing in northern South Africa, through Zimbabwe, northern Mozambique, southern Zambia, Malawi and the southern DRC. The subspecies *unicolor* occurs in western Angola.

It is suspected that *Rousettus aegyptiacus* may make migrations of hundreds of kilometres.

Habitat

This species is closely tied to savannah woodland, where it is closely associated with riparian location. It appears to forage in and around thickets and well-developed undergrowth vegetation, avoiding open areas.

Ecology**Diet**

The species occurs in the moist, well-watered eastern parts of the region, but is absent from the dry west; this is possibly an indication of its reliance on fruiting trees.



The bulk of this species' diet is thought to be *Ficus* spp. but the bats also regularly raid fruit orchards such as litchi which can damage the crop. Other fruits recorded in its diet include *Syzygium* spp., *Harpephyllum caffrum*, *Ekebergia capensis*, *Prunus africana* and *Diospyros senensis*.

Radio-tracked individuals flew about 24 km from their roosting cave to a feeding site, a journey that took 90 minutes

Reproduction

In southern Africa, parturition generally occurs in the wet summer months. In Limpopo, South Africa (a summer rainfall region), mating and fertilisation take place in June–August and births occur in October–December.

In contrast, births are less seasonally restricted in the Western Cape (a winter rainfall region) and occur in October–February and June. In parts of East Africa, births occur twice per year

One or, occasionally, two young are born after a 105–107- day gestation period, followed by a 6-week lactation period. The young start flying at 9–10 weeks.

Roosting behaviour

Rousettus aegyptiacus roosts gregariously in caves. The bats are totally dependent on the presence of caves and their distribution is influenced more by the availability of suitable roosting sites than vegetation associations. Roosting colonies may number over 5,000 individuals, e.g. in the Mission Rocks caves in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. Numbers may also vary seasonally; at the Mission Rocks caves there may be fewer than 300 individuals in summer. Jacobsen and du Plessis (1976) observed the opposite pattern in caves in the Tzaneen area of Limpopo, South Africa, where numbers reached over 9,000 individuals at the Matlapitsi cave in March–April (late wet season) and declined to just over 3,000 individuals in June– August (winter). This suggests that some movement occurs between these two populations.

Status

Least concern

Reference

Monadjem, A, T. P. (2010). *Bats of Southern and Central Africa: A Biogeographic and Taxonomic Synthesis*. Wits University Press.