

OBC Zambia Bat and Wildlife Expedition

Trip Report, November 3-14, 2016

with Rob Mies, Helen Taylor, and Fiona Reid

November 3



We met up at Pioneer Lodge, not far from the Lusaka airport. Brian and Fiona arrived first and found a colony of Peter's Epauletted Flying Foxes in a tree near the swimming pool. Later we caught some of these bats over the pool. Helen also set nets in the camping area and caught a Cape Pipistrelle here. We captured one of a very flighty group of leaf-nosed bats, but she was carrying a large baby so we let her go. This species was Sundevall's Leaf-nosed Bat, *Hipposideros caffer*, living in a shed right next to the generator. Some of the group also saw a Thick-tailed Bushbaby (or Greater Galago).

Peters's Epauletted Fruit Bat, *Epomophorus crypturus*

November 4

We had some time in the morning to enjoy a good diversity of birds and also photograph the epauletted bats. Schalow's Turaco and Violet-backed Starling were among the bird highlights, along with European Hoopoe. At midday we left for Leopard's Hill Cave, a very large cave on a hillside. We were able to enter the cave in small groups and not overly disturb the bats. We saw a large colony of Egyptian Fruit Bats, caught numerous Natal Long-fingered Bats, and also saw but did not capture *Rhinolophus hildebrandtii* and *Hipposideros vittatus*. Back at Pioneer we didn't have much luck catching new bats but did enjoy a birthday crumble for Fiona.

Egyptian Fruit Bats, *Rousettus aegyptiacus*





November 5

We set off on the huge Kasanka bus/truck toward Kasanka National Park. Our first night was spent at Forest Inn where we were very fortunate to see [Lord Derby's Scaly-tailed Flying Squirrel \(*Anomalurus derbianus*\)](#), shown on left, setting out from a hollow tree. Batting was not successful, but we did enjoy sightings of Wood Owl and other diurnal birds earlier in the day.

November 6

We continued our long drive to Kasanka, and were relieved to arrive at lunchtime, giving us time to settle in and explore the area around camp. Our group went to see the departure of the huge colony of Straw-colored flying foxes from the BBC Hide (a tower fairly near the roost). Our first viewing of the bats exiting their roost was truly spectacular. Helen and her team set up nets near Wasa Camp, our home base. Netting was very successful. We caught about 8 species of bats including [Rueppell's Bat \(*Pipistrellus rueppelli*\)](#), shown on right. We also caught several individuals of the magnificent [Myotis welwitschii](#) (below) and one [Egyptian Slit-faced Bat, *Nycteris thebaica*](#) (below right).



November 7

We went out early on a walking safari and had good sightings of Puku, Wattled Crane and other species. We saw Vervets and Kinda Baboon, a race of Yellow Baboon. In the afternoon we explored other areas and ended up at Pontoon 1, where Helen had set nets. We had great views of Water Mongoose as we drove up.



Schlieffen's Twilight Bat (*Nycticeinops schlieffeni*) Banana Bat (*Neoromicia nana*)

The above bats as well as Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bat were caught. On the way back we heard two elephants trumpeting very close to our vehicle, and we saw elephants, a rather unusual species in Kasanka. We also had great views of a young Martial Eagle on our way back to camp.

November 8

We went on an early morning safari. Highlights were seeing a young Sitatunga chasing an Egyptian goose, and close views of hippo. Later we went to visit the Kasanka Conservation Centre and learn about their classes and work with children. In the evening we went up the Fibwe Hide attached to a magnificent tree, or watched from ground level as the amazing bat colony took to the sky once more. For many, this outing was even better than the previous viewing, as it gave a great impression of how many bats were flying.



November 9

We got up early to watch the bats return to their roost. We climbed a small tower on the very edge of the colony known as the Western Hide so we could observe bats landing. As the sun rose, the bats made their way down



below the canopy in search of shade. It was incredible to be so close to this great migration. After lunch we set off in two groups to Mfuwe, in a small plane. We transferred to Wildlife Camp, a lodge outside the national park. When all had arrived we went on our first safari in South Luangwa National Park. We saw lion, giraffe, bushbuck, kudu, and elephant. After dark we added a snake that was identified by our guides as a possible Boomslang (but may actually be an Angolan Green Snake) and flap-necked chameleon. It was a great introduction to the park.



November 10

We had an early morning safari into the national park, and after a break for siesta another venture out. We were waiting for the bat team to arrive and they made it in the late afternoon. We added zebra and other mammals to our list. We had a very close encounter with a large group of bachelor elephants, during which time the ignition of our jeep failed to start! We set nets at wildlife camp but caught very few bats, although the [Cape Serotine \(*Neoromicia capensis*\)](#) was caught as usual (left).

November 11

We had a morning trip with our driver from Wildlife Camp, and saw a good variety of birds. Helen's team went to a hollow baobab tree where we had previously seen horseshoe bats. She captured one which was identified as Bushveld Horseshoe Bat, *Rhinolophus simulator*. After lunch we transferred to the upscale and very nice Mfuwe Lodge, inside the park. We had an afternoon/sunset drive at 4 p.m. One of the highlights was a lioness with at least three young cubs. After dark we saw two spotted hyenas eating a cape buffalo, killed by lions. We also saw a Four-toed Elephant Shrew, Small-spotted Genet and a Giant Eagle Owl. On return to the lodge we found a dormouse on the walkway.

November 12

In the early morning we went on a safari walk with Paxton. We saw bones, droppings and tracks. We also saw another Four-toed Elephant Shrew and Cape Buffalo. After some free time at the lodge, we went out in the afternoon and saw several lions, hippo, and other species. After dark we watched a leopard walking along beside our truck. Some of the group had seen one the previous night, but finally everyone got to see this amazing cat. The bat group was catching bats at the lodge, and they recorded one new bat for our trip, the [White-bellied Yellow Bat, *Scotophilus leucogaster*](#), right.



November 13

We had our last morning game drive. We visited the site of a leopard kill the previous night. The kill had gone, but we were really lucky to see a leopard from the main entry road, walking along unperturbed by us (this was before the park gates opened so we were almost alone). We had fantastic sightings of this animal. Then we went on to a lion kill and watched several lionesses and two male lions eating a Cape Buffalo. After lunch we said goodbye to JoEllen and Crissy, who were going to one of the bush camps. The rest of the group flew back to Lusaka and to Pioneer lodge where we met up with the bat group for a goodbye dinner.

November 14

We enjoyed some birding and a final look at the Peter's Epauletted Flying Foxes at Pioneer, then groups departed to the airport for their flights home.



Rob and a friend



Yellow House Bat, *Scotophilus dinganii*