

Some notes about bats of Ghana

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During a recent two-weeks-visit to Ghana we managed to record a pretty fine number of bats. This wasn't the main aim of the trip but since small mammals (AKA Bats&Rats) are the salt and the pepper of the mammal watching, we decided write this short piece, just in case someone find it of some interest. Here we mention "13" Taxa. Please note that some of the bats are not identified down to species level, like the *Nycteris*, but we noticed enough differences to call them apart one from. A proper, rock solid, mammalwatching trip, should be able to harvest probably another dozen of species, boosting the total number of bat species up to 25.

On top of all this, Ghana is home of some of the very best and unknown bats on Earth, like *Glauconycteris superba*, popularly known as "Panda Bat" and mammalwatchers can make a difference finding some of these incredible jewels.

Bats are not as difficult to identify as we previously thought and nowadays, with the right photos of the ears, face, feet or just top notch portraits, we can work out IDs to incredible levels. And the more we work on them, the bigger the knowledge from a mammalwatchers approach, far away from the usual methods which involve acoustics or close examinations of the bat in hand.

All my bat photos are stored in Inaturalist and open for healthy identification discussion.

This is the commented list:

Straw-coloured Fruit Bat- Commonly seen around Accra, flying at dusk over the airport in two dates. We also found one at the place where we had lunch in the Shai Hills, roosting on a palm.

Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat- Very smart fruit bat, found along the road from Mole to Kumasi. Suddenly we saw bats flying around a Mango tree, all to discover some kids with slingshots giving hell to the bats



Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat

Hammer-headed Bat- Awesome views of males displaying just outside Ankasa, around this area: . I was about to photograph them when we felt the attack of a massive swarm of ants. With all the shaking and swearing, we ended running away with no photos. SHAME

White-bellied Yellow Bat- one singleton at Brugbani camp, Mole NP, inside one of the abandoned buildings. Coordinates for the camp: 9°20'34.6"N 1°52'17.2"W



White-bellied Yellow Bat

Little Free-tailed Bat- As the previous species, found at the Brugbani Camp. Hundreds roosting inside all the buildings



Little Free-tailed Bats

Egyptian Tomb Bat- Found in the very-well-known-cave in Shai Hills, mentioned in many reports on Mammalwatching.com.



Egyptian Tomb Bat

Slit-faced Bat 1- Found a small group in a culvert of Ankasa, next of the first pool.
Medium size Nycteris, potentially a interesting one.



Nycteris sp. 1

Slit-faced Bat 2- A small group in a culvert in Kakum. In very disturbed habitat, with medium size.



Nycteris sp. 2

Slit-faced Bat 3- 2 individuals roosting in a hollow, fallen log next to the main building of the Bobiri Butterfly Sactuary. Pointed out by the gardener! The massive size and the face pattern point out *Nycteris grandis*



Nycteris sp. 3 (*grandis* most likely)

Yellow-winged Bat- Easily found at daytime in Mole, where they favor dense thickets near the water. Cracker!



Yellow-winged Bat

Cyclops Roundleaf Bat- 7 of this awesome, furry creatures were found inside a hollow tree in Ankasa, only after so much checking.



Cyclops Roundleaf Bat

Benito Roundleaf Bat- two individuals roosting in a culvert in Ankasa, between the first and the second pool.



Benito Roundleaf Bat

Hipposideros sp (Caffer\Ruber group)- a very large group (Around 300) were roosting under a bridge next to the Ankasa entrance.



Hipposideros sp. (Caffer\ruber complex)

What we missed?

PLENTY! For starters, we didn't visit the second cave in Shai Hills that host a colony of Egyptian Fruit Bats.

There are several bat caves around Kumasi, all cited in this paper:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/19400829211034671?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.2>

These caves host a mouthwatering list of bats including stuff like *Hipposideros abae*, *Hipposideros jonesi* and *Macronycteris gigas*

We were very unlucky with the fruiting trees in Kakum and Ankasa but in the right season or at the right place, great fruit bats like Buettikofer's epauletted fruit bat, Veldkamp's dwarf epauletted fruit bat or Pohle's fruit bat should be a possibility.