

Townsville, Queensland microbat twitch 1–2 November 2025

David Andrew (all photos by John Rogers)



Queensland Horseshoe Bat in the culvert 20km west of Townsville.

Australian microbat identification can be fraught: few species can be identified by sight alone and positive ID often means trapping and measuring specimens – activities that

usually require an experienced team and specialised equipment. So when Jon Hall reported a reliable site for Queensland (Large-eared) Horseshoe Bat*, a species I had previously missed on Cape York Peninsula, John Rogers and I grabbed the opportunity to 'go see it'. We took an early flight out of Sydney to Townsville – a sprawling, unprepossessing city on the central Queensland coast – and picked up Alec Karcz at James Cook University (JCU) campus, who guided us to a waist-high culvert on (in?) the Hervey Range about 20 km to the west. Twitching is often a nerve-wracking exercise and to our relief, 3–4 **Queensland Horseshoe Bats** were roosting about half-way along the culvert, and allowed excellent viewing and photographic opportunities. Apart from their distinctive large ears, some individuals of the species, including these ones, have distinctive yellow nose-leaves, making identification reliable without having to handle the bats. A few other microbats were clustered at the far end, but unlike the QHBs they showed no distinguishing features that would allow identification more confident than 'vesper bat sp'.

From there we returned to JCU where we explored several culverts and bridges, encountering some microbats that were almost certainly **Large-footed Myotis** and others quite likely **Eastern Cave Bats**. Before we dropped him off, Alec gave us some gen for a few species John needed for his growing Australian mammal list, starting with **Allied Rock-wallaby** at Ross River Dam about 20 km south-west of Townsville. After lunch we first poked about in Anderson Park where Rufous Owls are known to roost, though none were to be seen that afternoon. Luckily the rock-wallabies proved to be a walk-up as they grazed at the foot of the dam wall among a few **Agile Wallabies**. Next we tried unsuccessfully for Whiptail Wallabies back at JCU, where they graze at well-watered sites around campus. One of our key targets for this trip was also Mahogany Glider, which has its core range about 100 km north of Townsville, so we drove up the Bruce Hwy about 85 km to an isolated forest block, surrounded by cane fields, from which we were sure no glider could escape our night vision equipment. Arriving at dusk we thermalled hopefully, to no avail, although a Barn Owl emerging from a hollow caused momentary excitement. After a couple of hours of seeing nothing more we moved on to Jourama Falls campground, where 'hogs' are seen sporadically although Alec reckoned our chances were about 1 in 5. In fact, with a bright half-moon it was quiet all round apart from White-throated Nightjars (seldom seen 'down south') and numerous *chop-chopping* Large-tailed Nightjars; very little was on the move except for Agile Wallabies and Cane Toads. Eventually about 10 PM some rustles in the undergrowth turned out to be a **Queensland Barred Bandicoot** and a **White-tailed Giant Rat**. A few **Black Flying-foxes** squabbled overhead and we had another poke around the first Mahogany Glider site, but eventually about midnight we called it and headed back via one of Alec's Rufous Bettong sites – again no luck apart from lots more Agile Wallabies. The following morning we had one more unsuccessful crack at whiptails at JCU then a quick visit to Townsville Common, a large wetland on the northern edge of the city, where John photographed Magpie Geese for his 'bird families of the world' collection and we saw a solitary **Dingo** and a few **Feral Pigs** as we made our way back to the airport.

***Taxonomic note:** According to the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#) (GBIF) this taxon was formerly treated as a subspecies of the widespread *R. philippinensis*. To quote GBIF: 'Based on morphology, the populations on the Kai Islands and Queensland belong to the same species, for which the name *achilles* has nomenclatural priority.' Neither the common nor the scientific names used here seem to have gained traction in Australia so far, and most publications still refer to it as *Rhinolophus robertsi*.

MAMMAL LIST

1. Queensland Barred Bandicoot

Perameles pallescens



Queensland Barred Bandicoot, near the end carpark beyond the campground at Jourama Falls.

2. Allied Rock-wallaby

Petrogale assimilis



Allied Rock Wallaby, grazing at the foot of the Ross River Dam. This species is part of the Queensland rock-wallaby complex.

3. Agile Wallaby

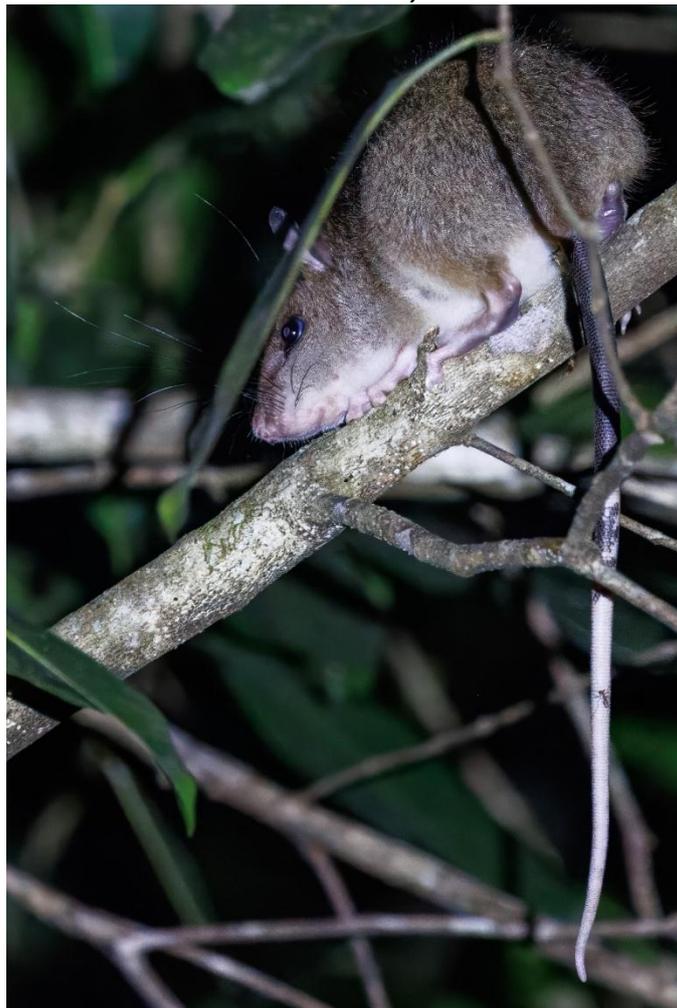
Notamacropus agilis



Agile Wallaby, common at JCU campus, Ross River Dam and roadside after dark.

4. White-tailed Giant Rat

Uromys caudimaculatus



White-tailed Giant Rat, poking around the campground at Jourama Falls.

- 5. Queensland Horseshoe Bat
- 6. Eastern Cave Bat

Rhinolophus achilles
Vespadelus troughtoni

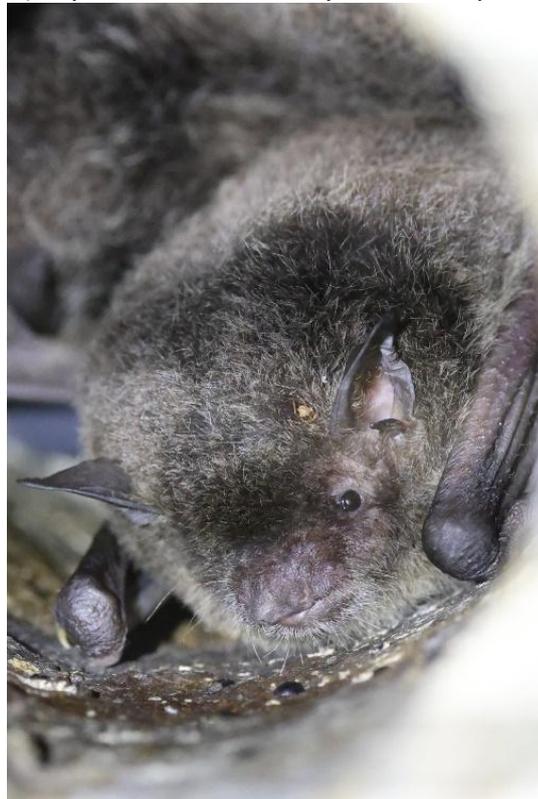


Queensland Horseshoe Bat in culvert in Hervey Range.

Eastern Cave Bat in a small culvert, JCU campus.

- 7. Southern (Large-footed) Myotis

Myotis macropus



Southern Myotis in a large culvert near water where they have been seen fishing.

8. Black Flying-fox

Pteropus alecto

9. Dingo

Canis lupus

10. Feral Pig

Sus scrofa

PS. Alec Karcz sent the following pic from JCU taken shortly after we were there:



Whiptail Wallabies on JCU campus.

BIRD LIST

Australian Pelican
Masked Lapwing
Bush Stone-curlew
Pied Stilt
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Red-necked Stint
Magpie Goose
Black Swan
Great Egret
Plumed Egret
Little Egret
White-faced Heron
Black-necked Stork
Royal Spoonbill
Australian White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Australian Brush-turkey
Black Kite
Whistling Kite
Brown Falcon
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Barn Owl
Australian Boobook (h)
White-throated Nightjar
Large-tailed Nightjar
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo
Little Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Galah
Rainbow Lorikeet
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
Peaceful Dove
Torresian Imperial-pigeon
Crested Pigeon
Pacific Koel (h)
Pheasant Coucal (h)
Laughing Kookaburra
Blue-winged Kookaburra
Rainbow Bee-eater
Dollarbird
Welcome Swallow
Blue-faced Honeyeater
Noisy Friarbird
Little Friarbird
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Australian Magpie
White-breasted Woodswallow
Torresian Crow
Great Bowerbird
Olive-backed Oriole
Australasian Figbird
Magpie-lark
Spangled Drongo
Willie Wagtail
Common Myna



Bush Stone-curlews of the tropical 'rufous' morph. Barn Owl on the lookout for Mahogany Gliders.



White-throated Nightjar, Jourama Falls.