

Threatened species of the Northern Territory

Bare-rumped sheath-tailed bat

Saccolaimus saccolaimus nudicluniatus

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Near Threatened

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976



Credit: B. Talbert

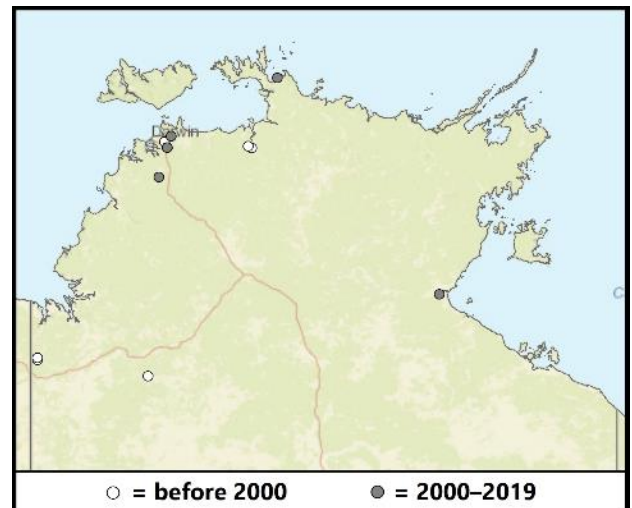
Description

The Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat is a large (38–69 g) insectivorous bat. As with other sheath-tailed bats, the tip of the tail is free of the tail membrane. There is some geographic variation in external morphology. In Queensland, the fur is reddish brown to dark brown above, with white spots or flecks, slightly paler below and usually absent on the rump. In contrast, animals from the Northern Territory have whitish fur below, lack a naked rump and white dorsal flecking may be absent. Some individuals in the Northern Territory can be easily confused with the Yellow-bellied Sheath-tailed Bat *Saccolaimus flaviventris*¹.

Distribution

The Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat has a wide distribution from India through south-eastern Asia to the Solomon Islands, north-eastern Queensland, the Northern Territory (NT) and Kimberley. Populations in Australia are attributed to the subspecies *S. saccolaimus nudicluniatus*, but the taxonomy is unresolved².

The first record of the Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat in the NT was collected in 1979³, and the species has been infrequently recorded since this time. Records of the species in the NT are sparsely scattered across the Top End.



Caption: Known localities of the Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat in the NT (nrmmaps.nt.gov.au)

NT conservation reserves where reported: Kakadu National Park, Keep River National Park, Limnen National Park, Judbarra/Gregory National Park.

Ecology and life-history

The Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat is a high-flying insectivorous bat. In the NT, specimens have been collected from open Pandanus woodland fringing the sedgelands of the South Alligator River in Kakadu National Park⁴, and from eucalypt woodlands and forests extending from coastal and adjacent inland areas¹. In Queensland, it is known mainly from coastal lowlands, including eucalypt woodlands and rainforests. The Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat roosts colonially in tree hollows.

Females in the NT give birth to a single young between late November and March. Generation length is estimated to be 3–5 years².

Threatening processes

Threats faced by the Bare-rumped Sheath-tailed Bat are poorly understood. Habitat loss and degradation, particularly the loss of roost hollows, is likely a significant localised threat. For example, increasing levels of clearing in the Darwin-Mary River region may negatively impact this species in the NT. Inappropriate fire regimes that reduce the availability of tree hollows are a potential threat. Vegetation change associated with saltwater intrusion and/or invasion by exotic species (such as *Mimosa pigra*) may also negatively impact habitat quality.

Conservation objectives and management

Priority conservation management actions for the species include: 1) undertaking targeted surveys to better understand habitat requirements and distribution, including identifying important subpopulations and roost sites, 2) protecting important subpopulations, roost sites and mature trees, 3) maintaining habitat quality, particularly around roost sites, and 4) assessing trends in

population and distribution, and the relative impacts of threats⁵.

References

- ¹ Milne, D.J., Jackling, F.C., Sidhu, M., Appleton, R., 2009. Shedding new light on old species identifications: morphological and genetic evidence suggest a need for conservation status review of the critically endangered bat, *Saccolaimus saccolaimus*. *Wild. Res.* 36, 496–508
- ² Woinarski, J.C.Z., Burbidge, A., Harrison, P., 2014. The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012. CSIRO Publishing, Canberra.
- ³ McKean, J.L., Friend, G., and Hertog, A.L., 1981. Occurrence of the sheath-tailed bat *Taphozous saccolaimus* in the Northern Territory. *North. Territ. Nat.* 4, 20.
- ⁴ Friend, G.R., Braithwaite, R.W., 1986. Bat fauna of Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory. *Aust. Mammal.* 9, 43–52.
- ⁵ Threatened Species Scientific Committee, 2016. Conservation Advice *Saccolaimus saccolaimus nudicluniatius* Bare-rumped Sheath-tail Bat. Department of the Environment and Energy, Canberra.