

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

BARE-RUMPED SHEATHTAIL BAT

Saccolaimus saccolaimus

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Northern Territory: Data Deficient

Description

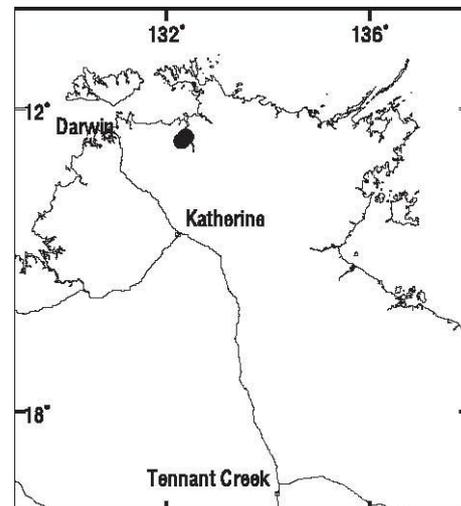
The bare-rumped sheathtail bat is a large (50g) insectivorous bat. As with other sheathtail bats, the tip of the tail is free of the tail membrane. The fur is dark red-brown to almost black, with white speckles, and this fur doesn't extend to the rump.

Distribution

This species has a wide distribution from India through south-eastern Asia to the Solomon Islands, and including north-eastern Queensland and the Northern Territory. The north-eastern Australian populations are described as the subspecies *S. s. nudicluniatu*s, although it is not clear whether this should be applied to the Northern Territory population (Duncan *et al.* 1999).

It was first recorded in the Northern Territory in 1979, and there have been very few (<5 confirmed) records since (McKean *et al.* 1981; Thomson 1991). All confirmed records have been from the Kakadu lowlands. McKean *et al.* (1981) asserted that it was likely to be more widespread in the north of the NT, but the very few records since, despite substantial survey work on microchiropteran bats (e.g. Milne *et al.* 2003, 2004), suggest that this may not be the case.

Conservation reserves where reported:
Kakadu National Park.



Known locations of the bare-rumped sheathtail bat.

● = post 1970

Ecology

This is a high-flying insectivorous bat. Specimens were collected from open *Pandanus* woodland fringing the sedgeland of the South Alligator River in Kakadu National Park (Friend and Braithwaite 1986). In the Northern Territory, it has also been recorded from eucalypt tall open forests (Churchill 1998). In Queensland, it is known mainly from coastal lowlands, including eucalypt woodlands and rainforests (Duncan *et al.* 1999).

It roosts in tree hollows and caves (Duncan *et al.* 1999).

Conservation assessment

The national assessment of Critically Endangered was based on the apparent absence of recent records from its relatively small known historic range in north-eastern Queensland, associated with substantial vegetation clearance there.

Its status in the Northern Territory is very difficult to assign, given the remarkably few records (just one specimen currently exists in the N.T Museum). One problem is that there is no record of a diagnostic call assigned to this species that can be used for detection (Duncan *et al.* 1999).

In the Northern Territory, there is no information from which to consider trends in status, and no obvious threatening process. While the known range is currently very limited, this largely may reflect sampling problems. Given this lack of critical information, the taxon is best considered **Data Deficient**.

Threatening processes

There are no obvious threatening processes. Hollow availability may be reduced by increasing levels of clearing in the Darwin-Mary River area, but this will not affect populations within Kakadu National Park.

Vegetation change associated with saltwater intrusion and/or invasion by exotic species (such as *Mimosa pigra*) may affect habitat suitability.

Conservation objectives and management

Research priorities are to:

- i. undertake a targeted study to better define habitat, distribution, population size, and status, and to develop more effective detection techniques.
- ii. resolve the taxonomic status of the Northern Territory population relative to that in north-eastern Queensland.

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