

A summary of recent bat records from Aldabra atoll

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Fig. 1. Bats of Aldabra atoll, from top to bottom: *Taphozous mauritanus*, *Triaenops furculus*, *Chaerophon pusilla*, *Pteropus (seychellensis) aldabrensis*. (drawing by J. GERLACH)

References to bats in the records cards kept in the Aldabra Research Station were collated and are summarised below.

Fruit bats

Fruit bats have been observed on virtually every corner of the atoll where there is either suitable feeding or suitable roosting to be had (various authors 1970-2004). They are more commonly encountered in mangrove stands where they can both feed and roost (various authors 1970-2004). They are also often observed in taller trees such as Casuarinas and coconut palms (various authors 1970-2004). Large groups of fruit bats (up to 40) have been sighted roosting in Casuarina trees on Ile Esprit (S. WOODSELL 1974, A.S GARDNER 1981). At the Takamaka grove on Grande Terre, 48 bats were seen roosting in 2000 (M. BETTS). On Ile Michel groups of up to 50 were noted in 1974 (S. WOODSELL). Even larger groups (100+) have been observed in the Casuarina trees on the eastern end of Malabar Island (S. PIERCE 1995).

Fruit bats are regularly observed flying across channels to visit other islands (various, 1970-2004). Occasionally they carry their young with them under their bellies (R. HNATIUK 1975). Various accounts (sometimes very graphic) of mating have been recorded (various observers 1970-2004). Often the prominent penis and the grooming of it after copulation by the male have been emphasised.

Fruit bats have been seen feeding on a variety of plants: fruits of *Terminalia catappa* (I.R.S 1975), *Mystroxydon aethiopicum* (R. HNATIUK 1975) and *Ficus rubra* (as *F. avi-avi*; S. HNATIUK 1973); leaves of *Avicennia marina* (R. HNATIUK 1974); and flowers of *Agave sisalana* (unknown observer 1973) and *Cocos nucifera* (R. HNATIUK 1974). Fruit bats have been seen eating coconut from nuts that they themselves had opened by gnawing at them with their teeth (Local staff members 1974 -2004). Once, a fruit bat was found with its head lodged firmly in a coconut at the top of the tree. The bat was released from the nut upon which it climbed back up the coconut in order to get some altitude to fly off (P. ROGERS & U. SAMEDI 2004)

Fruit bats are often mobbed by birds: pied crows (*Corvus albus*) have been noted to peck at roosting bats and generally harassing them (R. HNATIUK 1973), the Aldabra drongo (*Dicrurus aldabranus*) (unknown observer 1974), frigate birds (*Fregatta* spp.) (S. HNATIUK 1974, WOODSELL 1974) and the Madagascar kestrel (*Falco madagascariensis*) (S. HNATIUK 1973) has also been observed mobbing the bats

Table 1 Data on microchiropteran bats captured on Aldabra

	Bat 1	Bat 2
Place of Capture	Station	Station
Date of capture	1974	1977
Recorder	J. Wilson	J. Whitelaw
Body length	79mm	66mm
Tail length	28.6mm	18mm
hind foot	6.8mm	8.5mm
Ear length	12mm	14mm
Forearm	39.2mm	45mm
Fresh weight	5.7g	6.5g
Sex	male	male

Other bats

A small species of insectivorous bat has been sighted at the following places by various observers between 1970–2004 at Anse Mais, Middle camp, Station, Cinq Cases hut, Anse Polymnie and Bassin Flamant.

Two accounts of capture have been recorded (summarised in Table 1). Bat 2 appears to be the specimen of *Triaenops furculus* preserved in the British Museum (Natural History) (BM 78.185).

MICHAEL BETTS identified a small bat (approx. 5cm length) at the station as the tomb bat (*Taphozous mauritanus*) in 1998. It was identified from a photo found in the library of a bat taken from Nowark & Paradiso elsewhere. Identified using colour patterns and basic morphological traits of a live bat in the top of a coconut palm at 27x magnification binoculars.

In addition a bat was collected in a house at Picard on 9th April 2004. This was identified as *Triaenops furculus* by R. & G. GERLACH, the specimen is preserved in the collection of the Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles.

REFERENCES

- NOWAK, R.M. & PARADISO, J.L. 1983 *Walker's Mammals of the World*. 4th Edition. John Hopkins Press, London.