

Southern Bent-wing Bat

Miniopterus schreibersii bassanii



One of four critically endangered mammals in Australia, Southern Bent-wing Bats (also known as the Large Bent-wing Bat) can be distinguished from other bats in SA by the long third finger that folds back, creating a 'bent wing' appearance when they fly. They are medium-sized bats with reddish-dark brown fur on their backs and lighter coloured bellies. Populations of Southern Bent-wing Bats have been steadily declining in the last 40 years.

Diet

These bats feed on insects such as moths and beetles and eat whilst in flight, catching insects in their tails and wings (like a baseball mitt!) or directly with their mouths. Like other bats they use echolocation to find their way around in the dark and hunt for insects.

Breeding

Baby Bent-wing Bats are called pups, and females give birth to one pup between October and January. To give birth, females migrate in late August to special maternity caves, which have the right structure and microclimate for nursing the young. There are only two nursery caves that these bats use, and the most popular of these, Bat Cave, is in South Australia. Pups are born naked but soon after grow their fur. They attempt their first flight at four to five weeks.

Habitat

Southern Bent-wing Bats have a highly restricted range across the south-east of South Australia and western Victoria. They hunt in a range of environments, from wetlands to vineyards and woodlands. They are cave dwelling animals and hibernate and rest during the winter months in caves in the south-east, as there are fewer insects around to eat.

Over 50 caves are known to be used for hibernation.

Threats

Drought and the drainage of wetlands are threatening their survival by providing less food and water. Disturbance during hibernation and the degradation of cave habitats are other threats, and possible indirect poisoning from insect spray (eating insects that have been poisoned).



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.



Natural insect control! It is estimated the Southern Bent-wing Bat can consume about 25% of its body weight per meal! One bat may eat two or three meals per night; so a population of 1000 bats could consume several kilograms of insects per night.

Conservation

Bat Cave (their maternity cave) is protected within Naracoorte Caves National Park which has World Heritage status. A recovery plan has been developed for this bat species.

You can help the Southern Bent-wing Bat by:

- taking part in local efforts to preserve habitats for wildlife
- raising awareness of this species in your local community
- visiting the Naracoorte Visitor Information Centre to learn more!

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

