

Monthly Report

August 2016



Epomophorus labiatus
Little epauletted fruit bat

ABC Staff



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News

The 17th International Bat Research Conference Hosted in Durban, South Africa.

August saw the 17th International Bat Research Conference take place in Durban, South Africa. This event only takes place every three years and has, in the past, been hosted in such places as Costa Rica and Prague. Bat Scientists from all corners of the world attend.



Bat research from around the world is presented and new networks formed. Being in an African country for the first time since 1975 provided an opportunity for African bat scientists to meet and discuss their research.

Emma (ABC PI) and Matt (ABC Senior RA) both attended and presented some of the research conducted by ABC. Emma delivered a presentation on our bats and farms study which highlights the role bats play as pest control. Matt presented about the new bat species recorded in Liwonde National Park, including new species for Malawi.

Several workshops were also hosted at the conference including an African Bat

Prioritisation workshop, where various stakeholders worked to identify the main threats to bats across the continent. ABC brought key information to this meeting. A meeting of Bat Conservation Africa (BCA), a networking umbrella organisation, designed to link up bat professionals across the continent, also took place.

The conference was a great success for ABC and Liwonde National Park as we raised the profile of bats in Malawi and many different parties were interested in our research in the country. Plenty of ideas for future research were formed and the possibility of ABC and Liwonde playing a key role in capacity building for the continent was discussed. Overall the conference was an exciting event and demonstrated that international eyes are looking towards relatively unknown bats of Africa.



Nandumbo Health Centre Bat Exclusion.

Nandumbo health centre has for a long time been host to over 800 Angolan free-tailed bats (*Mops condylurus*). The bats have been a considerable cause of conflict due to their noise, smell and from damage to the ceiling from faeces and urine.

ABC prioritised this roost to be excluded as a health centre delivering services to vulnerable people is, without question, not the place for bats to be living.

Peter (ABC RA) and Kate (ABC RA) led the exclusion and were assisted by Godwin (ABC Outreach Officer) and his community facilitator for the Nandumbo area, Kingsley.



Emergence surveys were carried out to identify access points the bats are using and count the numbers of bats using the roost.

Following this survey, which estimated over 800 bats in the building, exclusion began. Many holes were plugged with plastic sheeting and a local builder hired to permanently block these holes with concrete. Several access points were left open and fitted with one-way doors which allow the bats to leave but not return. The exclusion was extremely successful and Precious, the coordinator for the centre, was extremely grateful.

Two New Bat Species for Liwonde National Park!

Two new species have been identified within Liwonde National Park this month bringing us up to between 31-35 species, depending on genetic testing.

We had suspected that both of these species may be present but we managed to confirm it this month.

The first species was the long-tailed serotine (*Eptesicus hottentotus*) which was caught

at LWRIV07, a southern riverine site.

The second species was Thomas's house



bat (*Scotoecus albofuscus*) which was found at LWRIV02, another riverine site. Thomas's House Bat is hardly known to science with only six specimens in museums. It is thought to favour low-lying, humid savannahs.

Sonja Greil (ABC Intern) completes her project comparing bat activity between habitats in the Park.

Sonja Greil, a second year student studying in the Netherlands at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, completed her project this month. Sonja had been an Intern with ABC for six months and had worked extremely hard on her project. She went well beyond what is expected of a second year project and has learnt a lot of lessons in preparation for her Honours project! The study compared bat activity across riverine and mopane habitats in the park. Sonja spent many hours analysing



sonograms of bat calls and looking at activity levels at different points of the night.

As predicted she found that bat activity is higher in riverine sites which further supports the claim that riverine and wetland sites are of key importance to biodiversity. The

methodology can be used and built upon to monitor bat activity long term and can be used to identify key factors which impact on the biodiversity of the park.

New ABC Members

ABC has had two new members of staff join us this month. Godwin Zimba, who has had a lifelong passion for the environment, studied Natural Resources Management at Bunda University and then went on to teach for six years in public secondary schools.

Godwin has joined ABC as our Community Engagement Officer in Liwonde. He is keen to combine his passion for ecology with his knowledge and experience teaching and engaging with communities.



Kathy Halsall has joined ABC as our new Urban Bat Researcher. Kathy studied at York University and has extensive experience working in conservation around the world and working with bats.



Kathy will be based at our office in Lilongwe

and is looking forward to conducting research in an urban environment and to identify sources of bat/human conflict in the city. We have also had Eric Chisale, a long term volunteer join us. Eric has just graduated from Bunda University where he studied environmental science. Eric found out about us through attending ABC presentations at Bunda and seeing us working to mitigate bat/human conflicts.

Bat Safari

ABC have taken a variety of people out on surveys this August. We took three interested guests from Mvuu out on a bat survey in August. Des, Marilyn and Jenny, from New Zealand and Namibia, are spending six months of their retirement traveling across Africa in a purpose built vehicle.

Des had some experience ringing birds (he assures us that bats are harder to retrieve from a mist net!) and Jenny was interested as she has a lot of bats living in her garden in Namibia.

Luckily we caught several bats on the survey and all were extremely happy with their experience. They kindly left us a donation to contribute to our work.

We also took out Caley and Mio Nevin, the children of British High Commissioner, Michael Nevin.

They really enjoyed the bat surveys they experienced and were lucky enough to be on an exciting survey where we caught 13 bats of 8 different species, including several large fruit bats. To add to the excitement we had a hyaena and elephants turn up on the survey.

Both Caley and Mio were extremely helpful, even around camp when not on survey and were very grateful for their experience when they left.

Summary of Work

Bat surveys carried out in August

Our Biodiversity Monitoring Project (BMP) surveys are those that follow a standardised methodology and contribute to our long term monitoring project which also aims to answer some research questions such as identifying the thresholds of decline for many bat species and to look at anthropogenic factors which impact on bat communities.

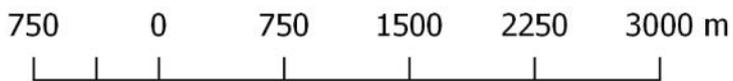
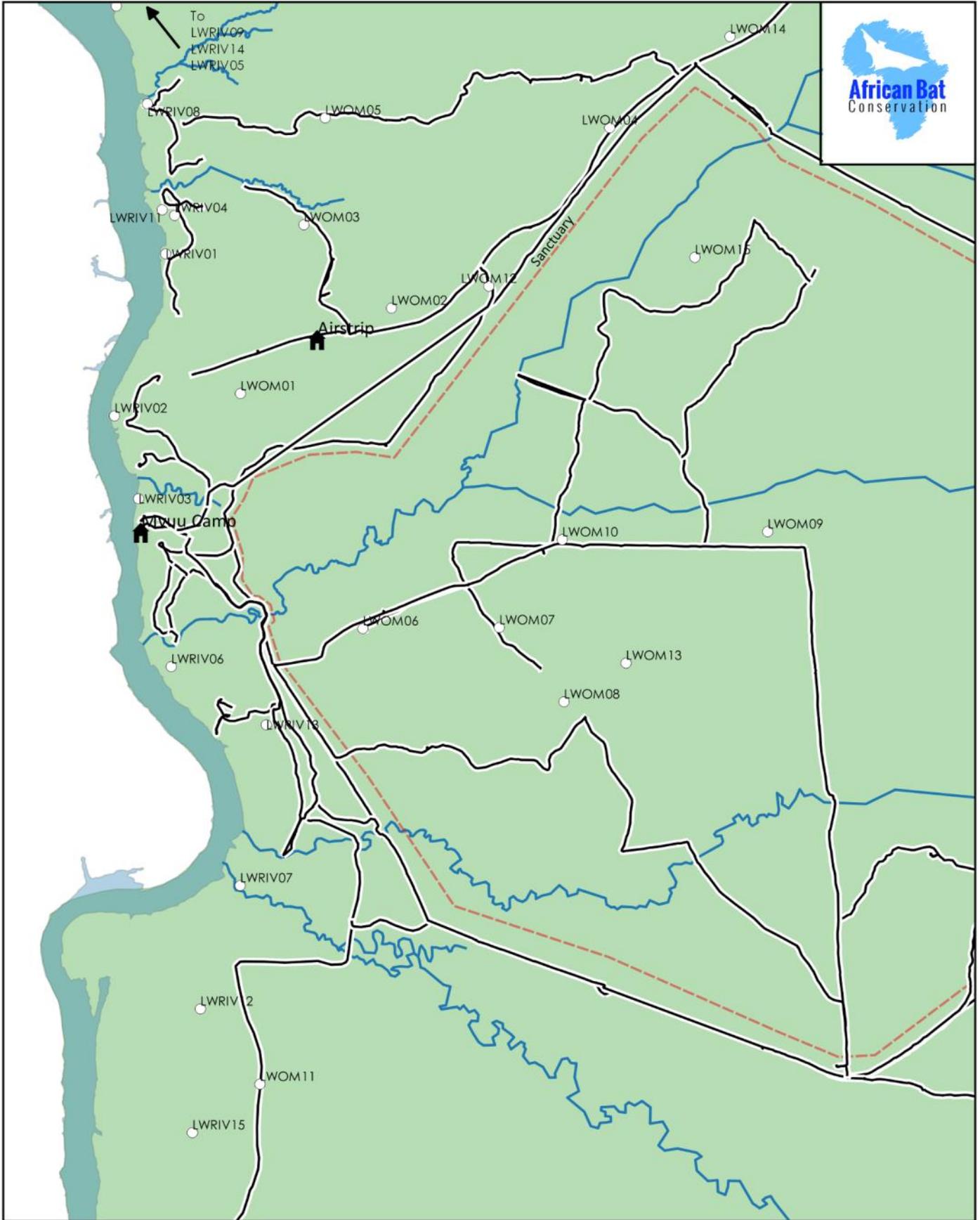
Date	Type	Site Code	Location	Total Bats Caught	Species Caught
29/07/2016	BMP	LWRIV02	Liwonde NP	2	1
01/08/2016	Roost	LWROOST27	Nandumbo Health Centre	3	1
02/08/2016	Opportunistic	LWBATC01	Mvuu	3	1
03/07/2016	BMP	LWRIV09	Liwonde NP	3	3
04/08/2016	Opportunistic	LWBATC01	Mvuu	3	1
06/08/2016	BMP	LWRIV13	Liwonde NP	4	2
09/08/2016	BMP	LWOM01	Liwonde NP	0	0
11/08/2016	BMP	LWRIV07	Liwonde NP	13	8
15/08/2016	BMP	LWRIV15	Liwonde NP	1	1
17/08/2016	BMP	LWRIV05	Liwonde NP	4	3
19/08/2016	Opportunistic	LWRIV02	Liwonde NP	3	2
24/08/2016	BMP	LWOM14	Liwonde NP	0	0
26/08/2016	BMP	LWOM13	Liwonde NP	1	1

Outreach work carried out in August

Date	Type	District	Location	Outcomes
01/08/2016	Roost Conflict Mitigation	Balaka	Nandumbo Health Centre	Mitigating human/bat conflict. Educating the community.
03/08/2016	Meeting Group Village Headman	Balaka	South West of the Park	ABC introduced to GVH Nkamwana. Discussed conflict situations. Identified facilitators.
08/08/2016	HELP Malawi Meeting	Machinga	Mvuu	Discussed education in schools and other members of the community who use their facilities.
16/08/2016	Chikolongo Fish Farm Meeting	Balaka	Chikolongo Village	Met Philip Namagonya, site supervisor for the farm. Discussed us being involved in the next community meeting to introduce us to all members of the community.
18/08/2016	Meeting Group Village Headman	Balaka	Nandumbo	Met GVH's wife. Briefed on the project. Will make future contact with the GVH.
23/08/2016	Roost Conflict Mitigation	Balaka	Nandumbo Health Centre	Follow up visit to ensure that the last few bats are excluded.
23/08/2016	Meeting with Traditional Authorities	Mangotchi	Villages outside Masanje Gate	Met 2 GVH and the Senior GVH. Introduced the project and identified potential facilitators.
25/08/2016	Meeting with Traditional Authorities	Mangotchi	Villages outside Masanje Gate	Met Several GVH. Discussed facilitators and bats in the community.
26/08/2016	Visit to the Nanthomba	Balaka	Villages West of the park	Networking. Discussed shared goals with other organisations.



BMP Sites



Legend

BMP Sites

— Roads

🏠 Landmarks

--- Sanctuary Fence

— Drainage Lines

