

Biodiversity



Number 17

New Zealand bats/pekapeka

DESCRIPTION

We have two species of bat in Taranaki, the lesser short-tailed bat (*Mystacina tuberculata rhyacobia*) and New Zealand long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*).

DISTRIBUTION, BREEDING AND FEEDING

Little is known about the distribution of bats in Taranaki but both the short-tailed and long-tailed bat have been recorded here. Their ideal habitat is mature native forest, but they have been known to inhabit exotic forestry as well.

Short-tailed bats are somewhat unusual as they feed on the ground by folding their wings and walking on their 'elbows'. They eat invertebrates, nectar and pollen. Short-tailed bats are the larger of the two species weighing 12g to 15g.

Long-tailed bats catch their prey on the wing, using echo-location to detect prey in the dark. They catch invertebrates such as small moths, midges and beetles. Long-tailed bats weigh 8g to 11g. They are thought to have one offspring a year.

BATS IN TARANAKI

Historically, bats would have been common in Taranaki, but they are now rare mainly due to habitat loss and predation. It is possible that their distribution is wider than we know because they are nocturnal and secretive. They can be hard to see and hear. The sound bats make when they are echo-locating is too high-pitched for the human ear. Bat detectors help to locate bats and work by transferring the high-pitched sound made by the bat into sound audible to the human ear.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Check big old trees for bat roosts before you cut them down.
- Protect native bush and bush remnants.
- Trap pest animals such as feral cats, stoats and rats.
- Report sightings of bats to the Taranaki Regional Council Biodiversity Section.



Long-tailed bat



Short-tailed bat



Short-tailed bat

CONSERVATION

Both species are endangered. The long-tailed bat is classified as 'nationally vulnerable' and the short-tailed bat is classified as 'at risk, declining'.

THREATS

Threats to this species include:

- Habitat loss and degradation.
- Predation by introduced mammals such as cats and stoats.
- Competition for food and roost sites.

QUICK FACTS

- Bats navigate by using echo-location.
- They are nocturnal (active at night).
- They are small, about the size of a mouse.
- Their Maori name is pekapeka.
- The long-tailed bat can fly at 60km/h.



Long-tailed bat



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