

Insectivorous bat monitoring in the Kruger National Park

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Insectivorous bats play an important ecological role as predators and as bio-indicators for environmental health and climate change. However, although bats form a substantial part of mammalian biodiversity, they are frequently overlooked because of their cryptic lifestyles (i.e. being nocturnal, flying, and roosting in hard to reach places). Consequently, bats are a notoriously hard group to survey. In this project, we aim to use a combination of ultrasonic bat detectors and live captures to survey bat species occurrence in the Kruger National Park. The data collected will add to the known distributions of bats in southern Africa and, significantly, be comparable with our own and historical data. The data will inform us about bat community structure, and changes therein, in what is considered South Africa's premier refuge for insectivorous bats. Moreover, we plan to use our baseline acoustic data to develop a robust cluster analysis tool, specific for the Kruger National Park, to facilitate the implementation of long-term bat monitoring that can be linked to climate change.