

Bat Priorities in the Pacific

A list of important bat issues for the Pacific region was compiled by current and previous bat workers in the region, together with members of the Round Table for Nature Conservation. The resulting list was grouped into 16 activities in 5 areas: research, legislation, public awareness, conservation, and information sharing. The same group then used a simple scoring system to prioritize them.

Sharing the highest scores (13 and 12) were:

1. **Inventories of microbats** - Audits, detector surveys and roost visits. Distribution (local and geographic), population status, habitat associations.
2. **Inventories of fruit bats** – audits, roost visits, surveys. Distribution (local and geographic), population status, habitat associations.

Sharing the next highest scores (6 and 5) were:

3. **Public awareness** campaigns
4. **Public education** and community training courses, or example set up bat groups.

In the next group (scores of 3 and 2) were:

5. **Bats as resources** - traditional use and the perception of the resource by locals (to achieve a way to enhance hunting legislation and protection measures).
6. Identifying causes of **bat declines**, for example *Emballonura semicaudata* which shows a catastrophic decline in Fiji and Samoa.
7. **Ecological studies of microbats**, particularly focusing on critical habitat issues (both roosting and foraging).
8. **Regional conference** / seminar to share knowledge on Pacific bats and promote collaboration between countries on bat research and conservation. Set bat conservation priorities both within countries and across the whole Pacific region.

With scores of 1 were:

9. **Training** on bat handling and research techniques; planning for improving or making available expertise and skills for conduct of studies in the region.
10. Protection and strengthening of multi-species **agro-forestry systems** which are the main target of many fruit bat populations, especially on small island that have experience widespread deforestation.
11. Create a **bat network** in the Pacific for the study of bats to promote the use of standard monitoring methods to enable comparisons between islands.
12. Incentives for conservation. Note – this was an additional activity suggested during the prioritisation exercise.

Not scored were:

13. Studies of **bats and diseases** of people and livestock.
14. Studies of **specialist species** and those of limited distribution (eg *Chaerephon bregullae*, and *Notopterus*).

15. **Legislation:** review to give endangered species greater protection; enforcement of existing legislation.
16. **Captive breeding** of endangered species.
17. Form an international **team to review and implement** the mini-action plan for *Emballonura semicaudata*, the Pacific Sheat-tail bat that was published in the IUCN Global Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan in Micropteran Bats (Hutson et al. 2001).

Special thanks to James Atherton, Frank Bonaccorso, Fabrice Brescia, Phil Cowan, Roger James, Niall Moore, Randy Thaman, Ruth Uzzurum, and Dick Watling for their input and comments.