

Native bat / pekapeka (two species: *Chalinolobus tuberculatus* & *Mystacina tuberculata*)

Introduction:

Bats belong to one of the most diverse groups of mammals in the world that consists of approximately 950 species. New Zealand has two known species of bat - the long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) and the lesser short-tailed bat (*Mystacina tuberculata*). Both species belong to the Microchiroptera suborder of bats, which are characterized by their use of echolocation to navigate rather than relying on their sense of sight. A third native species, the greater short-tailed bat (*M.robusta*), is thought now to be extinct.



Vital Statistics:

Long-tailed bats are more common than short-tailed bats and are widely distributed throughout the mainland, Stewart Island, Little Barrier and Great Barrier islands and Kapiti Island. Long-tailed bats are the smaller of the two species. They are chestnut brown in colour, have small ears and weigh 8-11 grams. They can fly at 60kmph, have a very large home range (100km²), and are believed to produce only one offspring a year. Conversely short-tailed bats are more restricted in their distribution being confined to sites in Northland, central North Island, Nelson, Fiordland and Codfish Island. They weigh 12-15 grams, have large pointed ears and are a mousy-grey colour. The short-tailed bat is believed to be a lek breeder – whereby the males compete for traditional ‘singing’ posts and sing to attract a mate.

What makes it unique?

The two species of bat are New Zealand’s only native terrestrial mammals. They do not hibernate for as long as other bat species due to New Zealand’s temperate climate and mild winters. Short-tailed bats are unique in that they catch their prey on the forest floor. Their diet consists of insects, fruit, pollen and nectar. The long-tailed bats however, catch their prey during flight and are strictly insectivorous.

Conservation:

New Zealand’s bat fauna is in decline due to habitat loss, the proliferation of introduced predators such as rats, stoats and cats etc., and the disturbance of roosts. The Department of Conservation (DOC) has established a recovery program designed to conserve existing bat populations throughout their present range and establish new populations where possible. The recovery program has also initiated surveying of bat populations and bat distributions as well as further research into revealing the complex social systems of bats.