



MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 10 November 2021

IT'S BAT AWARENESS MONTH!

Microbats are often not seen or heard on our camping trips, but we have thousands of them in our bushland!

You very rarely see them as they make no noise, are tiny, and active only during the warmer months at night. Microbats are the most common and diverse mammal group in the Mallee bush and the floodplains.

There are fourteen different species of microbat in the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) region and all insectivorous, meaning they eat insects. Microbats can catch up to 500 insects an hour and eat up to half their body weight each night.

Mallee CMA team, through The Living Murray joint initiative, is working with The Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) to undertake a 'Before After Control Impact study' to measure bat activity levels and species richness to gauge their response to environmental watering.

The study commenced in 2020 – 21 at the Hattah Lakes Icon Site when only one lake contained water, Lake Kramen, providing the 'before' conditions. Autumn and spring watering events have allowed 18 lakes to receive environmental water during early 2021 with bat monitoring occurring over the summer period, providing the 'after' conditions. With all 18 of the lakes receiving environmental water, we are creating an abundance of flora and bug populations, perfect for the microbat.

Microbats do make sounds but at a frequency outside of the human ear's hearing range. As these bats are nocturnal and do not have the best eye sight, they use echolocation for flying around at night and hunting insects.

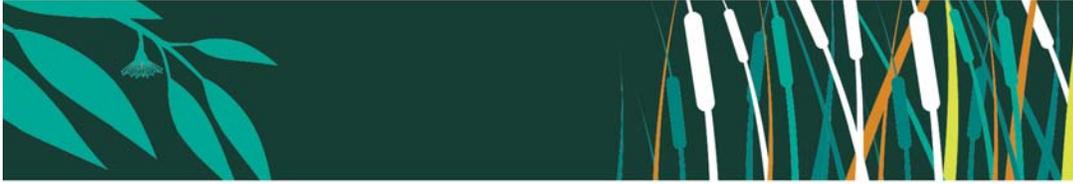
Microbats create sound waves in the bat's voice box and are emitted from the mouth or the nostrils. The echo that comes back to the bat indicates how far away the object is, as well as its size and texture, and if it's moving! This echolocation is similar to how whales and dolphins emit sound waves underwater.

Many bat species are sensitive to habitat changes and other kinds of disturbance, microbat populations around the world have been in decline for several decades. Bats rely heavily on the floodplain for insect prey, drinking water and hollow-bearing tree for roosting. The density and health of trees on and around the floodplain benefit from environmental watering, with the flow on impact providing significant benefits for the animals that rely on them.

Keep an eye on our social media to see what we find during our study!

If you think you might have microbats in your backyard, contact Mallee CMA via engage@malleecma.com.au to find out how you can borrow an Anabat to record bat calls.

For more information about the bat monitoring program and how to get involved visit the Mallee CMA website <https://www.malleecma.com.au/get-involved/bat-monitoring-2/>



Keep up to date with the latest information about the citizen science and other important programs follow our social media.

Quotes attributable to Mallee CMA CEO Jenny Collins:

Bats are an important indicator of health of our floodplains and surrounding bushland and decline in bat populations in Australia is cause for concern amongst Natural Resource Managers. Monitoring microbats in the evening at wetlands and floodplains is an effective way for scientists to assess what may be occurring with bat populations.

Ends

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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Background information:

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is a statutory authority established to ensure that natural resources in the region are managed in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way. Its work is based on science and delivered through meaningful partnerships with local organisations such as Landcare, community groups, and government agencies in the Victorian Mallee.

For more information visit www.malleecma.com.au