

Commerson's Leaf-nosed bat

Hipposideros commersoni

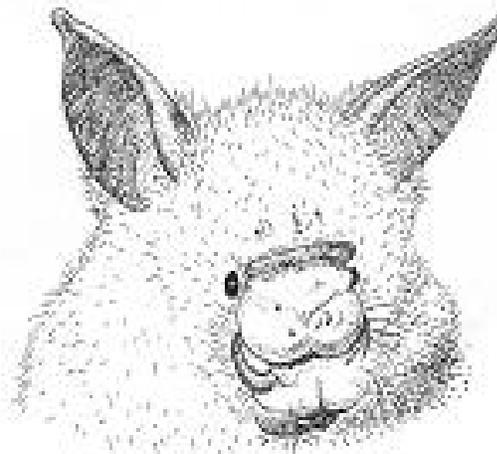


This is the largest insect-eating bat in Madagascar and one of the biggest in the world. In fact, it is so big that in the south of Madagascar it is hunted for food

This bat lives and feeds in Madagascar's forests but it also needs caves to rest in during the day. In forests with no caves, the bats sometimes roost in trees, or even buildings.

It has a very unusual life history that biologists in Madagascar are only now beginning to understand. Related bats in Africa migrate long distances (300 km) to areas of abundant food supply. We don't know yet about the bats in Madagascar, but they are often absent from some forests in the dry season and arrive in large numbers during the beginning of the wet season. Research by *Bat Conservation Madagascar's* students will soon uncover the story of the biology of this species.

Whilst most insectivorous bats feed by catching flying insects 'on the wing', Commerson's leaf-nosed bat perches in trees and waits for suitable food items to pass. Careful searching at night with torches may reveal these large, pale-bodied bats hanging from their favorite vantage point.



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Small insectivorous bats feed on mosquitoes, other flies, spiders and bugs but our studies show that Commerson's leaf-nosed bats eat really big insects, like cicadas, large moths and ground beetles up to 30 mm in length. We think that these bats can take large insects from the ground. It may be the abundance of these food types that influences the bats' movement patterns in Madagascar. In other countries, large bats like this also eat small frogs, rodents and even other bats. Further studies may reveal that Commerson's leaf-nosed bats is a carnivore! It's teeth are certainly big enough!



The unusual size and behaviour of this bat makes it easier to observe than the other insectivorous bats in Madagascar.



Although found in all of lowland Madagascar, **Ankarafantsika National Park** is a particularly good place to view Commerson's leaf-nosed bats and they can be observed at night perching in trees along the park's wide trails and also in under the roofs of buildings.

Bat Conservation in Madagascar

Until very recently there were no studies on the ecology and conservation of Madagascar's bats. Our work is leading to the discovery of new species and a better understanding of how deforestation impacts bats. This leaflet was prepared by *Bat Conservation Madagascar* in association with the Department of Animal Biology [University of Antananarivo], the University of Aberdeen and ANGAP.

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