

Project Update: September 2010 – June 2011

September 2010 – February 2011

The main activities during this period focused on the selection of focal cave-dwelling bat species, with help from my southern African collaborators and PhD supervisors, and trailing my field work methods.

Selecting focal cave-dwelling bat species

There are currently 116 known bat species in this subcontinent, 34 of which are cave-dwelling bats. My initial priority was to select focal species, considered to be at higher risk from human impact. Five species have been selected, by firstly focusing on species that had a high priority for conservation (e.g. data deficient species) and then including other threatened species with overlapping ranges to maximise data collection.

Trial field work methods (in particular driven transects)

Driven transects were successfully trialled both in the Northern Cape and Namibia (Etosha and Waterberg National Parks) to ensure the acoustic set up worked and that bats were recorded on the extended microphone.

February 2011 – June 2011

The main activity during this period focused on learning ArcGIS and species distribution modelling techniques. I have also started to create resources to increase public awareness of bat conservation through outreach activities.

Modelling

I spent a week at the University of Porto (Portugal) being trained by Dr Hugo Rebelo in GIS and modelling techniques. We have run initial models for each species, showing exciting initial results indicating potentially suitable habitat outside of the known range. The model is currently being refined and will allow me to plan my field work before going back to Southern Africa.

Outreach

I have decided to target outreach activities in areas near important roost sites. These sites are still to be chosen depending on modelling outputs. In preparation I am going on a Communicating Science training day (http://www.sebiology.org/education/science_communication.html) and have started preparing an information booklet with activities, targeted towards school pupils in southern Africa. I have also been creating a website to provide information on bat conservation to a general audience.