

Fecal pellets and food remains reveal what ghost bats eat in the Pilbara

December 4 2019



Captive ghost bats at Perth Zoo. Credit: Perth Zoo

UWA, Curtin university and Perth zoo researchers have discovered that Australian endangered ghost bats in the Pilbara (WA) eat over 46 different species.

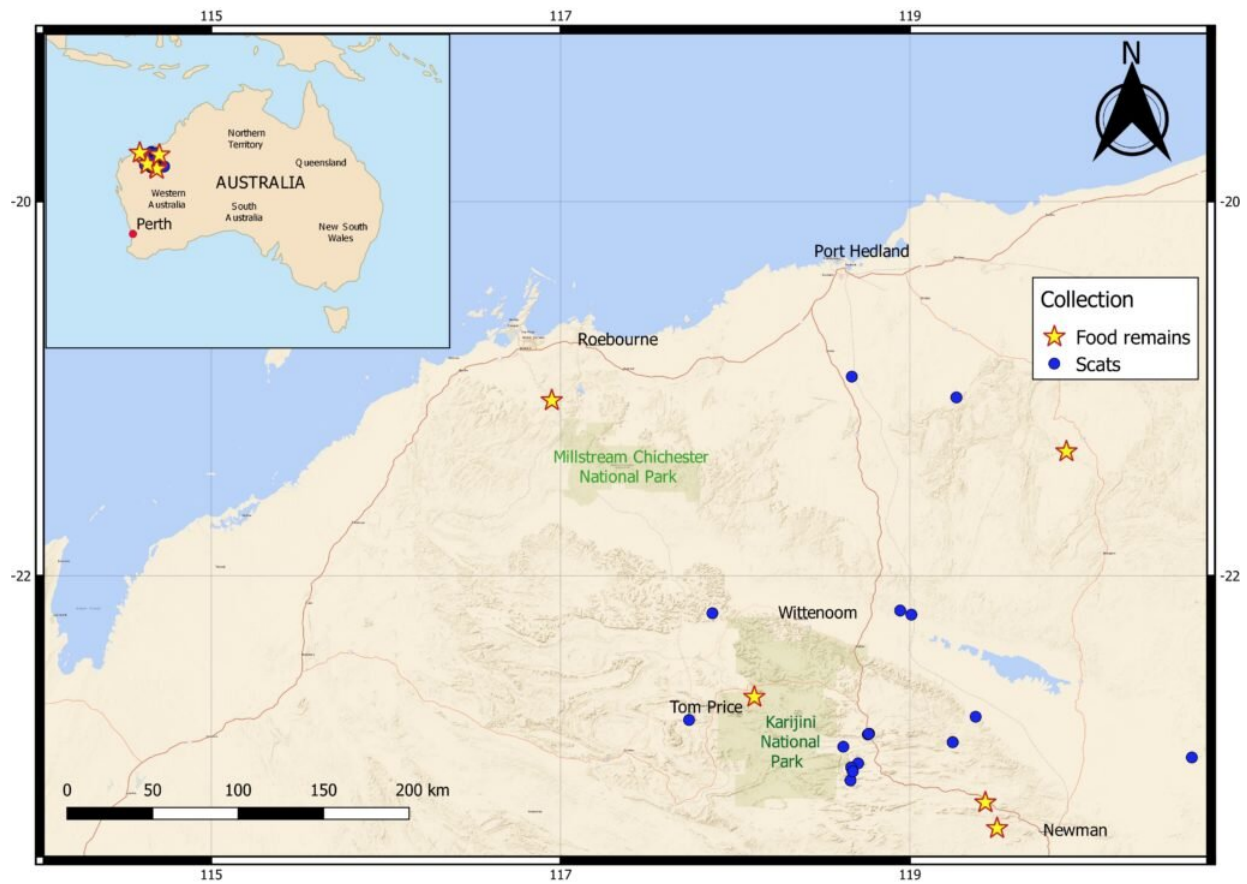
Its diet is very diverse, ranging from [small mammals](#) and birds to reptiles and amphibians.

Researchers used a new approach by combining two methodologies: DNA analysis of fecal pellets and classification of dried food remains.

They receive their name due to their pale gray color and "ghostly" appearance. They are top-level predators and very important for the ecosystem.

Ghost bats are decreasing with less than 10,000 remaining in the wild. The results provide crucial information for the conservation management of this iconic Australian species and its habitat.

Ghost bats are the largest microbats in Australia and the second largest in the world with a wingspan of 60 cm and weight up to 170 grams.



Map of the locations for the collection of dried food remains and faecal pellets.
Credit: Alba Arteaga Claramunt



Ghost bat prey remains collected from unused mines in the Pilbara. Credit: Estefania Salas

More information: Alba M. Arteaga Claramunt et al. Determination of the diet of the ghost bat (*Macroderma gigas*) in the Pilbara region of Western Australia from dried prey remains and DNA metabarcoding, *Australian Journal of Zoology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1071/ZO18040](https://doi.org/10.1071/ZO18040)

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