

A NEW BAT RECORD FOR THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

by

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Abstract – The first record of the Midas bat, *Tadarida (Mops) midas midas* (Sundevall), a large, tropical species of free-tailed bat, is noted from the vicinity of Skukuza, and it is also the first specimen of this species for South Africa.

In a previous publication on the small mammals of the Kruger National Park (Pienaar, 1964) the author stated that the check-list provided for bats could not be regarded as complete, and predicted that several species of migrant bats may yet be collected within the limits of this particular ecosystem. Seven years elapsed before this prediction was proved true, and on 19 February 1971 Mr. J. Marais, Superintendent of the byproducts depot on the Sand river near Skukuza captured an adult specimen of a large free-tailed bat that had dropped into one of the meat containers in the building.

The live bat was duly delivered to the research centre at Skukuza and identified as the Midas free-tailed bat, *Tadarida (Mops) midas midas* (Sundevall, 1843).

In size this is one of the largest of the free-tailed bats, and is only approached among African molossids by *Tadarida (Tadarida) africana* and *Tadarida (T.) teniotis*. The specimen, an adult male, had a mass of 37,7 gm and measured: head and body 97,0 mm, tail 39,4 mm, forearm 64 mm, hindfoot 13,6 mm, ear 26,3 mm and skull 28,8 mm.

The Midas bat is a relatively rare inhabitant of open woodland and savannah from Senegal to Nigeria, the Congo (Kinshasa), Sudan, Eritrea, Zambia, Rhodesia, Malawi and Botswana (Hayman, 1967). Another subspecies, *Tadarida (Mops) midas miarensis* (Grandidier, 1869) is found in Malagasy.

Little is known of the habits of this bat, but Verschuren (1957) regards it as an inhabitant of trees and buildings. They are communal, usually occurring in small, monospecific colonies. One or two young are produced at birth.

The bat is a general, dark, mouse-coloured grey with distinct patches of white hairs on the back, giving the coat a mottled effect. The ventral surface is somewhat lighter and the hair over the chest and upper abdomen has a rich yellowish-brown tinge (*vide* Fig. 1).

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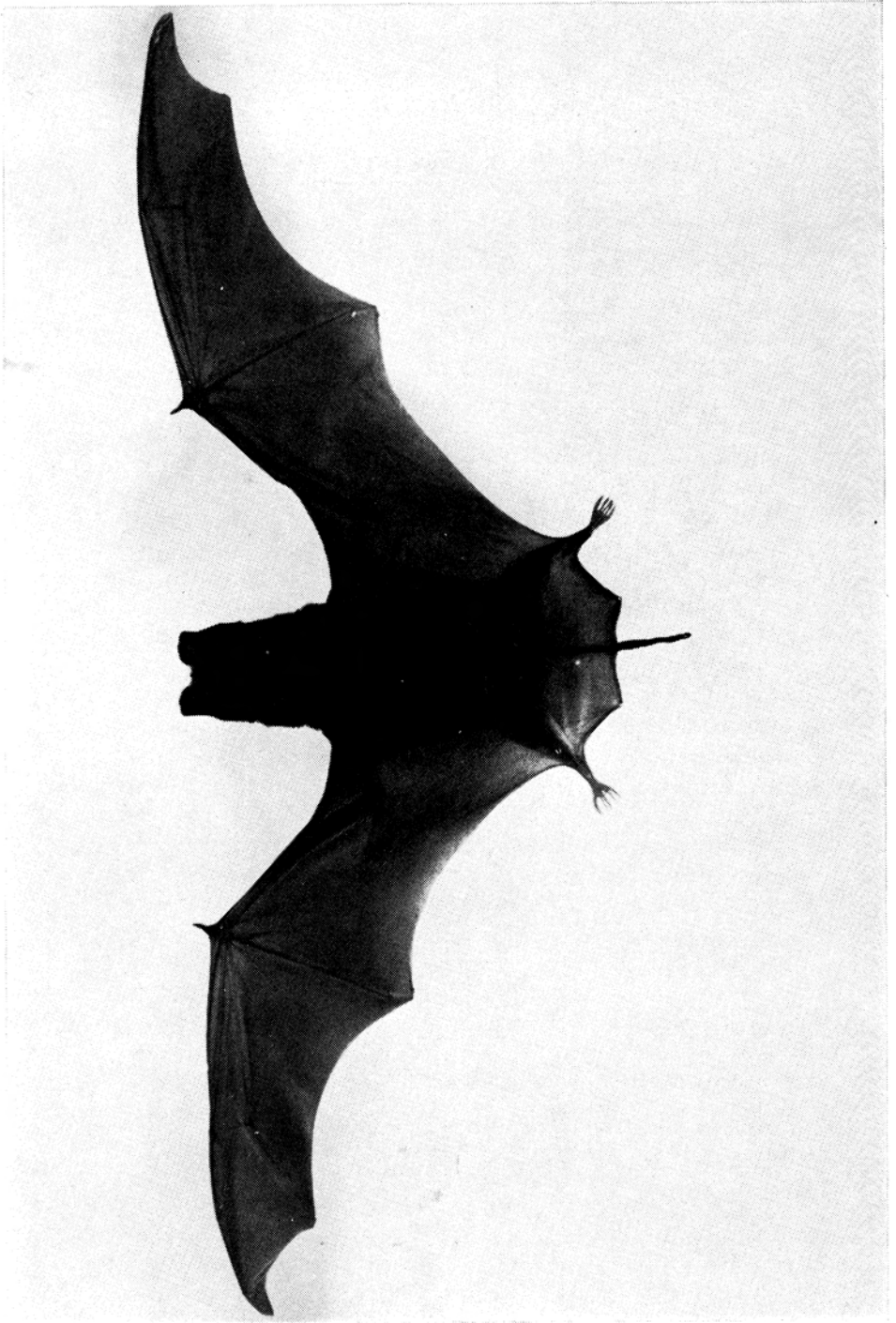


Fig. 1 The Midas bat *Tadarida (Mops) midas midas* from the Kruger National Park.

The Midas bat has not previously been recorded in South Africa and although it is obviously a vagrant, the Skukuza specimen represents the southern-most extension of the range of this species.

The discovery of *Tadarida (Mops) midas* within the boundaries of the Kruger Park makes it even more likely that any one of the following species may yet be added to the list of bats recorded for this sanctuary:

The straw-coloured fruit bat, *Eidolon helvum* (Kerr).

Geoffroys' horseshoe bat, *Rhinolophus clivosus zuluensis* Anderson.

Peak-saddled horseshoe bat, *Rhinolophus blasii empusa* Anderson.

Bushveld horseshoe bat, *Rhinolophus simulator* Anderson.

Swinneys' horseshoe bat, *Rhinolophus swinnyi* Gough.

Aloe bat, *Eptesicus (Eptesicus) zuluensis* Roberts.

Butterfly bat, *Glauconycteris variegata* (Tomes)

Rusty bat, *Pipistrellus (Pipistrellus) rusticus* (Tomes)

Kuhls' pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus (Pipistrellus) kuhli* (Natterer)

Natal woolly bat, *Kerivoula argentata zuluensis* Roberts.

Most of these bats are migrant species and likely localities for the future recording of one or other of those listed are the far north-eastern sector of the Park, between the Levubu and Limpopo rivers, the mountainous country around Punda Milia, along the Lebombo mountains on the eastern boundary and in the riverine forests and broken terrain along the Crocodile river in the southernmost region of the Park.

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