Scotophilus leucogaster – White-bellied House Bat

Regional Red List status (2016)  Least Concern*
Reasons for change  Non-genuine: New information
Global Red List status (2016)  Least Concern
TOPS listing (NEMBA) (2007)  None
CITES listing  None
Endemic  No

*Watch-list Data

Pending further molecular research, the subspecies Scotophilus leucogaster damarensis may be elevated to full species status, rendering it a southern African endemic (Monadjem et al. 2010).

Assessment Rationale

Listed as Least Concern as this species, although sparsely distributed, is found in a large protected area (Kruger National Park) in northeastern South Africa and inhabits savannah habitats, which are unlikely to decline significantly within the assessment region. Although it occurs in a limited number of localities within the assessment region, there are no plausible threats and thus Vulnerable D2 does not apply. Further field surveys and vetting of distribution records should be undertaken to improve the accuracy of its range map within the region. Additionally, should molecular research reveal S. damarensis to be a distinct species, a reassessment will be necessary.

Regional population effects: It is uncertain whether rescue effects are possible due to the discontinuity of its distribution in southern Africa. Further research on its dispersal capacity and connectedness is necessary. However, since it occurs in the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park and its habitat is thus connected to Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Monadjem et al. 2010), we assume rescue effects are possible.

Distribution

The White-bellied House Bat is widely distributed north of 5°N but sparsely and discontinuously distributed in the central savannahs of southern Africa, occurring in northern South Africa, southern Mozambique, and southern Zimbabwe, with a separate population in northern Zimbabwe, central Mozambique and southern Zambia, extending west to northern Botswana and Namibia, with an isolated record from central Angola (Monadjem et al. 2010). Habitat models suggest it might be more widespread in southern Africa than currently recorded (Monadjem et al. 2010), but there is also uncertainty about the validity of its range in southern Africa (encompassing Zambia, Botswana, South Africa and Angola). As such, further molecular research is needed to delimit its range more accurately. Within the assessment region, it occurs in Kruger National Park (KNP) in Limpopo Province. Specimens from Punda Maria (KNP) include large and small animals as well as specimens with both yellow and no yellow in their ventral pelage, which necessitates re-examination of the specimens to determine whether they correspond to either S. leucogaster or S. viridis (Monadjem et al. 2010). The type specimen for the subspecies S. l. damarensis is from northern Namibia (Monadjem et al. 2010).

Population

Little information is available on the population abundance or size of this species across its range, but is presumably uncommon. This species is not well represented in


Scotophilus leucogaster
The Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland

Scotophilus leucogaster

Figure 1. Distribution records for White-bellied House Bat (Scotophilus leucogaster) within the assessment region

Table 1. Countries of occurrence within southern Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Presence</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Extant</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Extant</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Extant</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Extant</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Extant</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current population trend: Stable
Continuing decline in mature individuals: No
Number of mature individuals in population: Unknown
Number of mature individuals in largest subpopulation: Unknown
Number of subpopulations: Unknown
Severely fragmented: No

Habitats and Ecology
This species has been recorded from both dry and moist savannah habitats. During the day, they roost in a variety of shelters, including holes in trees (Fenton 1983), such as Mopane (Colophospermum mopane) (Monadjem et al. 2010), gaps under bark, and roofs of houses. Roost sites may be changed regularly (Fenton et al. 1985). This species has a strong association with cathedral mopane woodland, especially in the Limpopo, Sebungwe and Zambezi basins of Zimbabwe, where it is often the most abundant microbat (Fenton 1985). At Sengwa Wildlife Research Station, Zimbabwe, the diet of Scotophilus leucogaster comprised mainly Hemiptera and Coleoptera, with Hymenoptera, Homoptera, Orthoptera, Lepidoptera and Diptera present in small numbers (Barclay 1985). Individuals foraged primarily over floodplains for an average of less than one hour at dusk and spent the rest of the night in small tree-cavity roosts (Barclay 1985).

Use and Trade
This species is not known to be traded or utilised in any form.

Threats
There appear to be no major threats to this species as a whole. Similarly, no threats to the South African population have been identified.

Current habitat trend: Stable. The Savannah Biome is not threatened in the assessment region (Driver et al. 2012).
**Conservation**
This species occurs in Kruger National Park in the north of the assessment region. No direct conservation interventions are necessary at present.

**Research priorities:**
- Taxonomic resolution through molecular and morphometric research.
- Field surveys delimiting geographical distribution and habitat preferences.
- Quantification of threats potentially facing this species.

**Encouraged citizen actions:**
- Deposit any dead specimens to the Durban Natural Science Museum or Ditsong Museum of Natural History.

**References**


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**Data Sources and Quality**

<table>
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<th>Table 2. Information and interpretation qualifiers for the White-bellied House Bat (<em>Scotophilus leucogaster</em>) assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Data sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data quality (max)</td>
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<td>Data quality (min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertainty resolution</td>
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<td>Risk tolerance</td>
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Details of the methods used to make this assessment can be found in Mammal Red List 2016: Introduction and Methodology.