

# GHOST BAT

*Macroderma gigas*

## WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

- Ghost bats occur in tropical regions in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia, but are unfortunately extinct in central Australia. It is believed this is caused by isolation and long term climate change and changed management practices.
- Ghost bats forage in a wide range of habitats from rainforest to monsoon and vine scrub, to open woodlands in arid areas. However, roost habitats are a little more specific. Ghost bats favour undisturbed caves, crevices, deep overhangs, and or mineshafts which have several openings.

## DIET

The Ghost Bat is Australia's only carnivorous bat, eating large insects, reptiles, frogs, birds, small mammals, and sometimes other bats species.

## AT WILD LIFE SYDNEY ZOO

- We have four males on display in Nightfall.
- We feed our bats mice, crickets and day old chickens. They also get, mealworms scattered to encourage them to forage.
- Ghost Bats will eat their food whole, including flesh, bones, teeth, fur, small feathers, and the chitinous exoskeletons of insects, so it is vital that we include this in their diet as it provides roughage in the diet which prevents distress and digestive problems.

Ghost bat eating a mouse at WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo

**STATUS**  
*Vulnerable*



**LIFESPAN**  
*In captivity*  
22 years

**WEIGHT**  
74-144 g

**LENGTH**  
98-118 mm

## WILD FACTS

- Ghost Bats will drop on small mammals from above, enveloping them with their flight membranes, and kill them with bites about the head and neck.
- The ghost Bat gains its rather spooky name from its unusually pale colouration. The long soft fur is unusually white or pale grey on the upperparts, while the underparts, head, ears, nose leaf and wing membranes are generally whitish.
- Prey is detected by echolocation, vision or hearing.
- Their echolocation call is of low intensity.

## CONSERVATION AND EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE

- Ghost Bats are sensitive to disturbance. Human intruders to a cave colony may cause the group to become nervous and leave.
- Known threats to the ghost bat are disturbance to roost sites from mining operations, collapse of old mines, or human disturbance. Other suspected threats are direct predation by cats, the reduction in prey populations from cat and fox predation, inappropriate grazing regimes and inappropriate fire regimes.
- In recent times population declines could be attributable to competition with feral cats, and prey lost through habitat modification by fire and livestock.