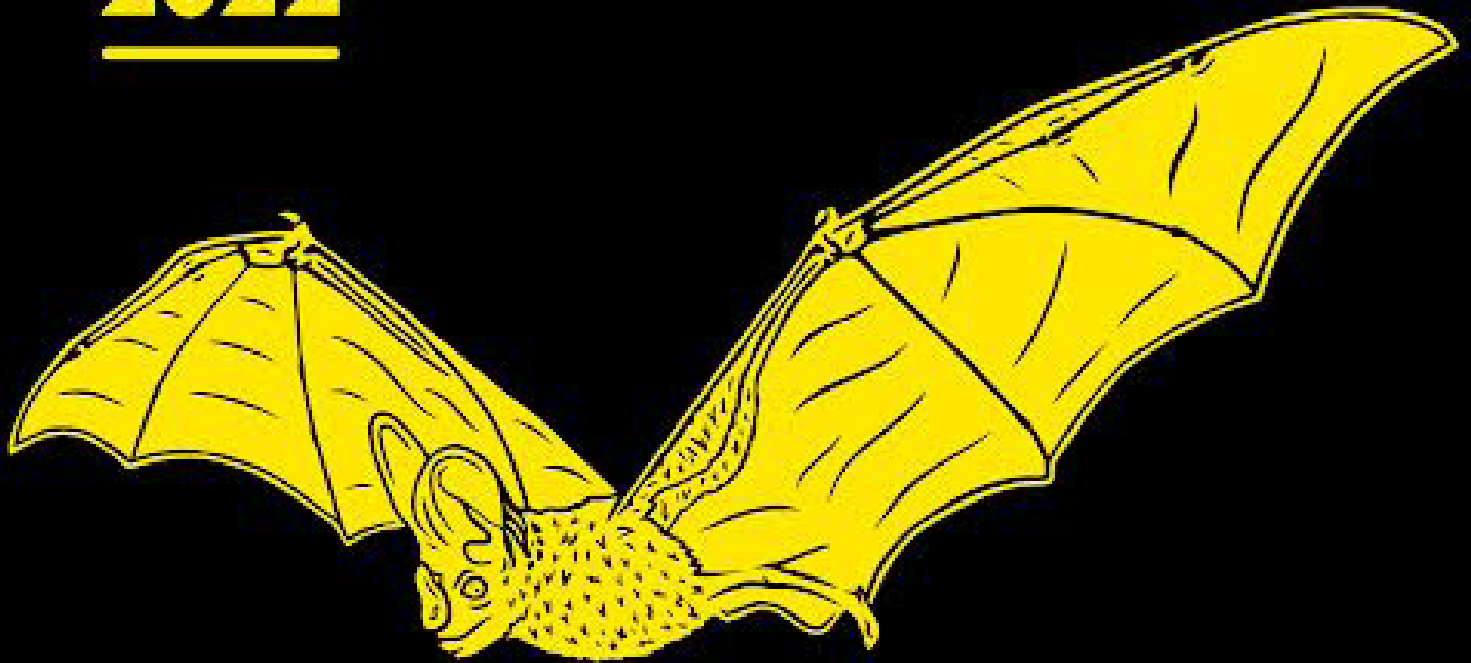


AUSTRALIAN CAVE ANIMAL OF THE YEAR **2022**



Ghost bat

Macroderma gigas

It's time to bat for bats!

Emerging from forests and caves to feed in the darkness, bats pollinate our crops and feed on insects that could, if left unchecked, become plague species. But 'out of sight and out of mind', people are often oblivious to bats. With declining populations and a range of threats, bats need humans actively on their side.

A resident of tropical areas in northern Australia, the endangered ghost bat is the only carnivorous bat in Australia. Its large eyes, huge ears (twice the length of the head!) and nose-leaf all assist its keen hunting skills to find prey, which includes small birds, mice, insects and snakes.

Cave Animal of the Year celebrates our little-known cave animals and the importance of caves as their homes. Join with us and learn more at:
www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au
hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au

Announcing the Australian Cave Animal of the Year 2022

Ghost bat (*Macroderma gigas*)

Cathie Plowman, Australian Cave Animal of the Year coordinator.

The Australian Cave Animal of the Year program seeks to celebrate cave animals and the importance of caves as animal habitat. With great delight we announce the ghost bat as our 2022 Cave Animal.

Bats have plenty of friends in the ACKMA membership, but bats and their important ecological role are not necessarily appreciated by the wider community. We can all be part of changing that in 2022 by assisting in the promotion of the Cave Animal of the Year.

Getting to know our 2022 Australian Cave Animal

Different authors give alternate reasons for the name 'ghost bat'. Some say it's for the pale colour of the wing membrane and pale skin, while others link the name to the near white to pale grey colour of the fur. Whatever the reason, the pale colours evoke ghostly associations.

Ghost bats are endemic to Australia and were once widespread over northern Australia including the arid lands. Today they are confined to three separate regions that are all north of the Tropic of Capricorn, all either near the coast or within about 400 kilometres of it.

A prominent feature of ghost bats is their large nose-leaf. Like most other bats, ghost bats use echolocation to navigate, and the ultrasonic waves of echolocation are generated in the larynx. The nose-leaf of the ghost bat is part of the complex system of directing and receiving echolocation to detect prey.

Batting for bats in 2022

Modelled on the German program of the same name that has been running since 2008, the Australian Cave Animal of the Year program is entering its fourth year. Other countries that now have Cave Animal programs are Italy, Switzerland, Spain, the USA, Greece, Portugal and Austria.

As COVID-19 limited opportunities to promote the International Year of Caves and Karst in 2021, the International Year has been extended to throughout 2022. Countries with Cave Animal programs all selected to have a cave beetle in 2021, and we're all combining to have a bat in 2022.

You can bat for bats

We've produced our attractive and popular items of poster, bookmark, sticker and tea/coffee mug. The poster, bookmark and sticker are all free of charge. Postage and packing fees are minimal. Donations are appreciated.

Mugs are \$10.00 each plus postage.

Help spread the word about ghost bats by displaying posters at show cave sites and in other public areas such as libraries, outdoor shops, Scout halls, cafes, schools and anywhere where we can increase public awareness about cave animals, and in 2022 the ghost bat. Use your imagination, the fitting rooms at the Paddy Pallin store in Launceston have Cave Animal posters in them.

The poster is not intended for private homes and offices. But if you can display one in a public area you can collect it back at the end of the year and have your own copy. Win win! (There are also a few 2021 cave beetle posters still available.)

We've got plenty of stickers and bookmarks that can be distributed free of charge at cave sites, outdoor clubs and conservation groups, school students and anywhere where there might be people interested in learning more about cave animals.

To order your 2022 Cave Animal of the Year products or any enquiries, please email: hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au

To learn more about ghost bats: www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au

Thanks to the ASF Karst Conservation Fund for ongoing support of the Australian Cave Animal of the Year program.





Cave animal of the year,
the Ghost Bat.

Photo credit
Bruce Thomson.