

# BAT RESEARCHERS VISIT ROCKHAMPTON

- Dianne Vavryn

On the 27 and 28 February, Greg Richards (Australian Bat Researcher) and seventeen members of Bat Conservation International visited Rockhampton. Fifteen of the local bat people were invited to attend a barbecue to meet these visitors.

While in Rockhampton, the visitors were able to view Mount Etna, hear a little of the local and environmental history, do a tour through Olsen's Capricorn Caverns, view the flying foxes leaving their camp at Ross Creek in Yeppoon, and visit the Botanical Gardens in Rockhampton.

The main reason for visiting The Caves District was to view the Bat Cleft Emergence Flight, but unfortunately the season was finished and Bat Cleft empty. Steve Walker, the Associate Executive Director of the Bat Conservation International, Inc., said that now they have a good reason to come back to this area, at a more appropriate time.

On both nights of their stay, mist nets and harp traps were set up at various advantage points. Both occasions were very disappointing, as only two sheath-tailed bats *Taphozous georgianus* were caught. Their calls were recorded as they were released. The idea was to record as many Australian bat calls as possible. The calls can be

replayed at our range of hearing and at a much slower speed.

Later on in the evening, when it started to shower, a harp trap was placed in the main entrance of Olsen's Cave to catch some of the Little-bent-winged Bats *miniopterus australis*, as they returned to the cave to shelter from the rain. Merlin Tuttle, (world renown bat researcher) felt he had not experienced such a poor night mist netting bats before. Many theories were made to explain why the bats were not very obliging.

To keep the visitors entertained, while waiting to see some bats, I presented a slide show. This consisted mainly of the Bat Cleft Emergence speculator, including bats emerging, three species of snakes eating bats, frogs eating bats, a frog trying to eat a snake, frogs sitting on the back of snakes hunting bats and visitors viewing Bat Cleft. Also slides of many cave decorations from both existing and destroyed caves from the area were shown.

After leaving Rockhampton they headed for Cairns and the Atherton Tableland. For Greg it was like going back home and there I am sure they would have had the opportunity to see and record many of our other Australian bat species.