

Short note | Nota breve

First record of Straw-coloured fruit bat *Eidolon helvum* (Kerr, 1792) for the Cape Verde Islands

Saray Jiménez & Cornelis J. Hazevoet

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On 8 September 2010, at 9:45 AM, a fruit bat was seen flying at a height of *ca.* 2 m over the sea off Ervatão, southeastern Boavista, Cape Verde Islands (16° 02' N, 22° 41' W). After a while, the animal landed in the beach vegetation. When captured, it did not offer any resistance to being handled and it was taken to the nearby sea turtle station, operated by the NGO Cabo Verde Natura 2000. The bat – which proved to be a female – was placed in an improvised cage made of plastic netting where it eagerly fed on the food provided, i.e. tomato, apple and banana. At 16:00 PM, the following biometric data were taken: head width 31.6 mm, humerus 81.1 mm, ulna 121.2 mm, tarsus 49.7 mm. When restrained for taking body measurements, the bat attempted to defend itself with its mouth. Its teeth appeared to be worn. A large number of ecto-parasites (tick-like bugs) were removed from the pelage of the animal, but none of these were collected and preserved. On 11 September, the bat weighted 220 g. During four days in captivity, the bat showed a preference for tomatoes and different fruits, while cucumber and insects (crickets) were refused. On 12 September, injuries on the bony protuberances of the wings, caused by contact with the wall of the cage, were noted and it was decided to place the bat out of the cage, allowing it to hang freely from a piece of plastic netting. The animal remained there for one hour, feeding quietly, and then flew away. After about 15 minutes, it appeared again at its resting place, stayed for a few

minutes and finally disappeared in the darkness of the night.

During its stay at Ervatão, several pictures of the bat were taken (Fig. 1). These unequivocally allowed the animal to be identified as Straw-coloured fruit bat *Eidolon helvum* (Kerr, 1792). This is the first documented record of Straw-coloured fruit bat (and indeed of any species of fruit bat) for the Cape Verde Islands (cf. Azzaroli Puccetti & Zava 1988). Straw-coloured fruit bat is locally common and widespread in sub-Saharan Africa from Senegal in the west to Ethiopia in the east and to South Africa in the south (DeFrees & Wilson 1988, Bergmans 1990, African Chiroptera Report 2010). *E. helvum* is a migratory species in parts of its range, with populations migrating from the West African forest into the savannah zone during the major wet season (African Chiroptera Report 2010). Roosts of up to half a million to more than one million animals have been reported from Ivory Coast and Nigeria, respectively, reaching their peak during the later half of the dry season (Thomas 1983). In West African countries adjacent to Cape Verde, the species is common and widespread in Guinea-Bissau (Rainho & Franco 2001). In Senegal, there are records from Ziguinchor in the south, near St. Louis in the north, as well as from intermediate regions (Bergmans 1990). In Mauritania, two dead adults were found in Nouakchott, 20 September 1993, and a colony of several 100s, said to occur during the wet season from May-June to September-October,

was present there during 1993-1995 (Cosson *et al.* 1996). Furthermore, there is a specimen in the collection of the zoological museum of Berlin, which, according to the label, was caught at sea near Las Palmas, Canary

Islands, 8 April 1915 (Bergmans 1997). If anything, the present record from the Cape Verde Islands agrees with the species' known period of occurrence in Mauritania.



Fig. 1. Straw-coloured fruit bat *Eidolon helvum*, Ervatão, Boavista, Cape Verde Islands, 9 September 2010 (Adolfo Marco)

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Saray Jiménez, Instituto Canario de Ciencias Marinas, Carretera de Taliarte s/n, Telde, Gran Canaria, Spain; email saray.jimenez.bordon@gmail.com
Cornelis J. Hazevoet, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical - Jardim Botânico Tropical, Unidade de Zoologia, Rua da Junqueira 14, 1300-343 Lisboa, Portugal

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