

ABSTRACT

Coastal Kenya has many coral caves hosting many different colonially-roosting bat species. Most of these caves are on private lands and face serious anthropogenic threats from expanding agriculture and other uses. I developed a method to count the bats inside the caves, which I then used on five occasions to obtain a starting figure for future monitoring of the bat populations. I also investigated the threats to caves and bats, including local peoples' perceptions about them. Population estimates were conducted via photography, while structured interviews and questionnaires were used to understand views of locals concerning bats and the threats they face. The caves housed 9 species of bats (1-7 per cave), one threatened (*Taphozous hildegardeae*) and one near threatened (*Hipposideros vittatus*) and housed between 100 and 73 000 individuals in each cave. The caves were most affected by agricultural activities that involved burning and cutting of vegetation near the cave entrances. Local people viewed bats negatively. They do not understand their importance in agriculture and persecute them whenever the occasion arises. Therefore, a robust public education and community outreach program is necessary to change peoples' perceptions and enhance bat conservation along the Kenyan coast.