

## **Critically Endangered Bat Population Jeopardised by Monorail**

Save Fiordland has released the findings of a field survey it commissioned on a population of the critically endangered South Island long-tailed bat (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) that lies in the path of the Fiordland monorail.

Conservation Minister Dr Nick Smith has yet to announce his decision whether to approve or decline the monorail concession.

The [bat survey](#) confirms the presence of a resident population roosting within beech forest adjacent to the Upukerora River within the Snowdon Forest Conservation Area.

This was one site along the monorail route where long-tailed bats were recorded by a superficial assessment undertaken by the applicant in 2009. There are only two other known populations in Fiordland.

The Department of Conservation lists the species as “Nationally Critical” - one step away from extinction. As such it sits alongside kakapo and takahe but without the profile these poster species have.

DoC says predation, habitat destruction, and roost disturbance are the factors that may see this species of New Zealand’s only land mammal gone from our forests within the next few decades.

Long-tailed bats cannot be translocated to island sanctuaries as endangered bird species can. Each bat population is dependent on its own forest home where specific tree roosts are used on a rotational basis.

The wide forest clearance required for the construction and safe operation of the monorail (and its permanent road) would likely see the felling of vital roosting trees throughout the bats’ home range.

The loss of the habitat provided by these massive, centuries old red beech would have a disproportionately large effect on the bat population. As well as being protective roosts, they are essential for social interactions including mating and rearing young. Their loss could not be mitigated by conservation measures elsewhere.

As Daphne Taylor of Save Fiordland observes, “If I was Minister of Conservation I would want to be the one who did everything possible to help every one of the known populations of our only native land mammal to survive.”

Given that this precious population was first reported five years ago could there not have been monitoring, research, and protection being undertaken? This most recent report states, that *“the loss of only a few breeding females would have a significant effect on a small critically endangered population”*.

Save Fiordland believes that approving the monorail concession, and thus the negative impacts on one of the few remaining habitats of a critically endangered species within *Te Wahipounamu*, the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area would be an unconscionable act.



Long-tailed bats need our hand, not our chainsaws.

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