Histology of the neck ‘glandular’ skin patch in Eidolon helvum, Rousettus aegyptiacus and R. angolensis (Chiroptera: Pteropodidae)

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Abstract

The histology of the neck ‘glandular’ skin patch has been examined in three Pteropodid bat species, Eidolon helvum. Rousettus aegyptiacus and R. angolensis. In E. helvum the neck skin patch contains a large sebaceous gland complex, which is better developed and more active in males than in females.

A comparable area in R. aegyptiacus contains rather non-specialized sebaceous gland alveoli in association with hair follicles and which are more active in males than in females. In R. angolensis the brush-like hair of the neck skin patch is much longer and coarser in the male than in the female, but in neither sex was the skin patch glandular.

On the basis of histological observations, the neck skin patch in E. helvum would appear to be important for scent emission while in R. aegyptiacus. the same structure would be less so. In R. angolensis, the neck skin patch, though covered by longer brush-like hair than in other species, contained almost no glandular tissue and perhaps functions to provide visual rather than olfactory behavioural cues.