

Friends of Bats

newsletter



Issue 118 December 2015

Hard times for flying-foxes in Sydney

Tim Pearson

It's not a good time to be a flying-fox who calls Sydney home. This year, dispersals have been carried out at the camps in Avalon and Kareela. Dispersal is threatened at Balgowlah. In addition, the Parramatta Park camp is under threat.

To make matters worse, dispersals have been approved (and carried out) at times of the year considered harmful to the animals – contravening the Office of Environment and Heritage's (OEH) best-practice guidelines.

Cannes Reserve, Avalon

The camp at Cannes Reserve, Avalon, was dispersed at the end of July. However this coincided with the normal reduction in numbers of flying-foxes in the Sydney region – the Gordon camp was deserted soon after – so it's debateable how much was directly due to the dispersal activities and how much to normal seasonal movement. However, in October the bats returned – as has been seen in nearly every other dispersal attempt. Pittwater Council then carried out "maintenance dispersals" – which in operation are identical to dispersals, but allowed to be conducted at times when a normal dispersal is prohibited due to the stress on the animals and threat to pregnancies.

Under pressure from a handful of local residents, Pittwater Council conducted dispersals even when dependent young were present in the camp – with the full approval of OEH. And in early November, Council conducted tree trimming at night, after the bats had flown out. This resulted in the severe pruning of 12 trees used as roost trees by mothers with young, and the effective destruction of the contiguous canopy in the camp. (The vegetation type is a declared Endangered Ecological Community – Pittwater Littoral Rainforest.) The short-term result was that the flying-foxes moved into other trees, closer to the residents who had complained. How this situation can be resolved is unclear. At present it appears that the cycle will stop only when there is nothing left of the reserve, and the bats have moved somewhere else.

The next closest camp, at Warriewood, has been abandoned for months due to adjacent construction work; the next two nearest camps are Balgowlah – itself contentious and being proposed for dispersal;



Bats roosting in the remnants of pruned trees in Cannes Reserve, Avalon. Photo, courtesy Sarah Thorpe

and Gordon.

Kareela, Sutherland Shire

At the same time, at Kareela in Sutherland Shire, a long battle with residents resulted in Sutherland Shire Council approving for full dispersal of that camp. This camp was only established after another camp – Kurnell – was abandoned during construction of the adjacent Sydney desalination plant. The Kareela dispersal was not approved in time for action to take place under the OEH guidelines (May - July) which are supposedly in place to minimise harm to the animals, so were approved to start in August. The animals were quickly dispersed from the camp but moved to adjacent areas of bushland; they were then in turn dispersed from these. Eventually, the animals abandoned the area; it's not known where (Cont. Page 2)

Speak up for flying-foxes!

KBCS members have been, and continue to be, active in lobbying local councils against dispersals and monitoring the actions for any breaches.

We urge you to protest about camp dispersals and treatment of flying-foxes in NSW. Write to:

The Hon. Mark Speakman,
NSW Minister for Environment,
Parliament House, Macquarie St,
SYDNEY 2000

Email: cronulla@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Hard times for flying-foxes in Sydney *(cont. From page 1)*

Kareela (cont.)

they have gone, but it's thought to be Wolli Creek. They have, of course, continued to try roosting in the Kareela camp. So Council staff have been conducting pre-dawn dispersals to prevent the camp re-establishing. Like the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens, they accept that this will be an ongoing action – probably for some years. The approved budget for this is \$800,000 - \$1.2million.

Parramatta Park

The Parramatta Park camp is an interesting case – the camp is supported by both the local Council and the managing body (Western Sydney Parks Trust). However a major development is planned for the area adjacent to the camp. This has been declared a [State Significant Development](#) so is out of the hands of local bodies, and proposes multi-storey apartment blocks sited just 50m from the camp.

Out of Sydney

Further afield, there's talk of dispersing the camps at North Avoca, on the Central Coast; and at Rudder Park,

Kempsey (a camp that formed after a previous camp was itself dispersed by construction of the Kempsey bypass). There's also a draft Plan of Management for the camp in Bateman's Bay (which thankfully proposes *in situ* management rather than dispersal).

It seems that New South Wales is following the direction of Queensland regarding flying-fox management: hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money being used on what are ultimately ineffective and pointless actions which at best only result in the problem being moved somewhere else – usually worse. Ironically, Queensland councils are now starting to realise this and are in some cases pushing back against resident complaints and trying to manage the issues rather than taking the knee-jerk action of dispersal. Sadly, many New South Wales councils do not seem to be getting the message.

Ultimately, however, what needs to change is community attitudes towards wildlife and nature – and the recognition that humans are part of the environment, instead of above it.



KBCS AGM 2015

KBCS held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 23 September 2015. After a great meal and a chance to catch up with friends, attendees were treated to a fascinating talk by Heather Baldwin on bat diseases.

The formal part of the evening followed.
KBCS Committee for the coming year is:

Chair: Tim Pearson

Deputy Chair: Sarah Curran

Treasurer: Jocelyn Chenu

Other Members: Lyn Burns, Kath Russell, Tina Hsu, Nancy Pallin, Cary Kuiper, Jen O'Meara, Heather Baldwin

If you were unable to attend and would like to receive the annual report which includes the audited financial statement, contact: web@sydneybats.org.au

Flying-fox monitoring

Fly-out counts of flying-foxes indicate that bat numbers decreased over winter in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. Numbers are starting to increase again as summer approaches. The November count estimated 6500 bats roosting in the reserve.

Threatened Species Day

7 September, 2015 was national Threatened Species Day (as it is each year): a day to commemorate the death of the last remaining Tasmanian tiger (also known as the thylacine) at Hobart Zoo in 1936.

This day is a time to reflect on what happened in the past and how we can protect our threatened species in the future. It's a day to celebrate our success stories and ongoing threatened species recovery work. Unfortunately this day passes without notice by many Australians.

There are now nearly 1000 plant and animal species listed as threatened at a national level in Australia with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation) Red List identifying a further 459 as 'near threatened'. These are the worst statistics in the world.

On this list are currently 10 bat species under the national *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, including the grey-headed flying-fox and the spectacled flying-fox.

At a state level, the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1993* lists 21 bat species including grey-headed flying-fox.

Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve Bushcare Group

meets every Tuesday 8.30am - 12.30pm
New volunteers always welcome!

For more information, email web@sydneybats.org.au

Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve - Bushcare Update

Nancy Pallin

The wallaby exclusion fences installed since 2011 are succeeding. Unfortunately swamp wallabies are very effective at harvesting young shrubs and can suppress regenerating plants. Currently there are eight plots of various sizes built by Bushcare volunteers. Plot five is 9 x 4.5m and a wattle (*Acacia parramattensis*) planted in 2008 and protected with an individual cage has now reached



Exclusion plot five, March 2014, (above)
& August 2015 (below)



Note the growth of a blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) which germinated in the fenced plot (green circle). In addition three more canopy trees, turpentines (*Syncarpia glomulifera*), have grown from seed.

canopy height.

Dry sclerophyll plants such as hop bush (*Dodonaea triquetra*), the pea-flowered shrub *Pultenaea flexilis* and various groundcovers have germinated from seed in the soil.

Clearing of the weeds to soil level and preventing wallaby browsing has enabled this regeneration to occur. For the reserve to support the wide range of birds and other animals that live here this regeneration is vital. The canopy trees, we hope, will one day provide new roosting for the flying-foxes, replacing trees which have died.

On the lower slopes of the valley and along the banks of Stoney Creek we are seeking to replace weeds with native vegetation which will provide plenty of under-storey shade and retain moisture so the flying-foxes have somewhere to wait out hot, dry weather.

KBCS Bushcare volunteers are experimenting with several ways to strengthen the vegetation along the floor of the valley. Where the creek banks are considered high enough to prevent fencing being knocked down by flooding, we are planting long-stem coachwoods.

The long stem planting technique involves planting deeply into the soil, with a large part of the stem buried. This technique offers two advantages over conventional planting methods. The first is that burying the root ball so deeply insulates it from environmental stresses such as temperature extremes and drought. Secondly, new roots form along the buried stem, creating a much more extensive root system to absorb water and nutrients and fuel new growth. This gives the plant a competitive advantage.

Regular checks are needed to ensure that the exclusion fences are secure and the gate closed.

So far the wallabies have not attempted to break through the fence or jump over it.

It is encouraging to see the young coachwood plants putting on new leaves.



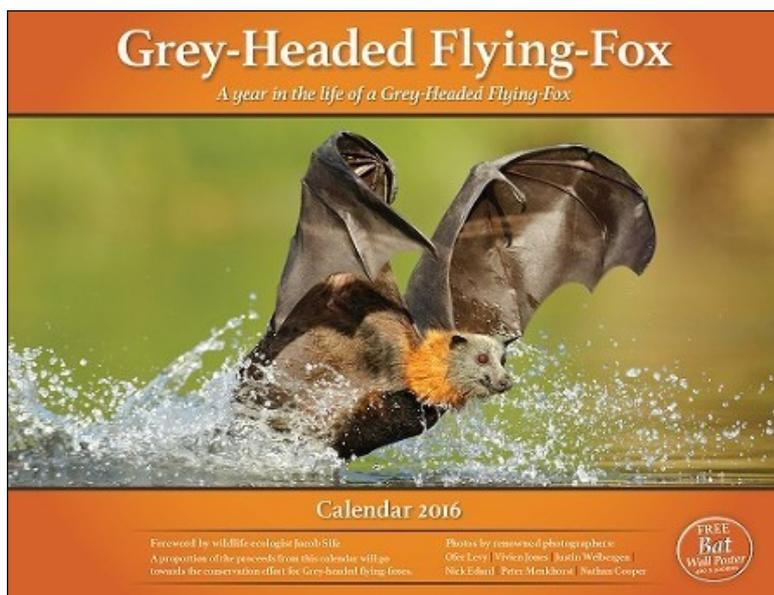
Jill and Nancy use a post hole auger to dig a hole for planting



Bruce prepares to plant a coachwood (above). The planting hole is ready for soil to be added (below).



2016 Flying-fox Calendar - purchase now to support bat conservation in Australasia



What a great gift idea for anyone interested in bat conservation, or bats in general! "A Year in the Life of a Grey-Headed Flying-Fox" is the brainchild of Wildlife Ecologist Jacob Sife.

The calendar has a month-by-month format: each month features stunning images of flying-foxes going about their daily business along with an information panel.

Visit <http://ausbats.org.au/calendar/45907205> for more information and to place your order.

It also includes a wall poster and a kids' craft activity.

Cost: \$13.20 inc. GST, plus postage (discount available for bulk orders)
Size: 230 x 300mm (wall poster 460 x 300 mm)

A proportion of proceeds from sales of the calendar will be directed towards flying-fox conservation.

Meet Kansas

Jump onto Sydney Bats Facebook and meet Kansas, an orphaned grey-headed flying-fox pup whose life story is being told by his carer, Georgina Binns. Kansas was 10 days old when he came into care after his mum was electrocuted on powerlines.



Georgina has taken on the role of providing food and comfort for Kansas and as he grows, Georgina updates us with his highlights, both personal and those similar to all young bats. Kansas is now over thirty days old and doing well.

For more, visit www.facebook.com/SydneyBats/

Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Thank you to all our generous donors, whether anonymous or acknowledged below. Donations received in our gift fund from July to December total \$2950.

Received from:

R Abell, C Austin, H Baldwin, M Bassarova, L Bayley, A Caruana, J Chenu, G Cohen, Y Cohen, L & J Desmond, B Dowsett, H Dunne, J Fairlie-Cuninghame, H Gardner, J Green, J Gye, J Hills, T Hsu, J Hutchinson, N Jones, N Kent, P Langley, H Leung, J Madden, N Myers, R Noone, Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc., D Ondinea, M Page, K Parkhouse, S & S Payne, T Pearson, J Pollock, L Pope, K Russell, D Russell, C Simpson, J Sinclair, J Snell, J Stockard, N Sutherland, B Taylor, L Toby, M Warner, C Wheatley, A Whitney, A & V Wigger de Vries, M Worley.

Meet a Bat Evening

Saturday 20 February, 2016

6.30 - 8.15pm

**2nd Gordon Scout Hall
32c Rosedale Road, Gordon**

Meet live flying-foxes up close and safely

Displays & craft activities for kids
Refreshments

watch the spectacular fly-out from
Rosedale Rd bridge

**Free, but bookings essential:
web@sydneybats.org.au
0428 981 420**

Friends of Bats

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