

Friends of Bats

newsletter

Issue 106 September 2012



QLD government thumbs its nose at Threatened Species Day

Jen O'Meara

The recently-elected LNP Queensland Government has reversed a decision made in 2008 to protect flying foxes, by re-introducing the shooting of flying-foxes, ironically, on Threatened Species Day - 7 September, 2012.

Four species of flying-fox can be 'taken' to protect crops. Under the Nature Conservation Act, a regulation to exempt flying-foxes from humaneness requirements has been gazetted, with agreement by the Commonwealth Government.

A Damage Mitigation Permit will permit up to 10,500 red, black, spectacled and grey-headed flying-foxes to be shot each year. Two species, the grey-headed flying-fox and the spectacled flying-fox, are listed as vulnerable under federal legislation. The government states this is approximately 1.5% of agreed national population estimates and deemed not likely to prejudice the long-term survival or recovery of these species and is the same number as that permitted during 2002-2008.

As the Queensland Government has acknowledged that shooting flying-foxes is inhumane, a code of practice will outline the methods by which the killing of flying-foxes can be carried out. Section 185 of the Nature Conservation Act allows a permit to be issued for damage or loss caused or likely to be caused by a flying-fox after the grower has attempted two forms of protection for one growing season.

The code specifies that only stationary flying-foxes can be shot, from a distance up to 25 metres, with the shooter responsible for identifying the species before shooting. A reasonable attempt must then be made to locate dead flying-foxes and to deal with wounded or orphaned flying-foxes immediately afterwards. It requires that all dead flying-foxes are searched for young and that young be either collected by a carer or killed (if the latter, that counts as one of the number on the permit).

For more information on the new code of practice and the issuing of permits visit:
<http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/livingwith/flyingfoxes/damage-mitigation-permits.html>

How dangerous are flying-foxes really?

In an excellent submission to Queensland parliament, prepared by Dr Carol Booth and endorsed by 28 NGOs, including our association, it was stated that the legislation referred to in the article above is "unjustified, unethical and legally flawed."

The submission also contains a table which ranks various causes of death in Australia. The table shows that **flying-foxes are responsible for an average of less than one death per year**, way below other insects and animals (1 - 100 annually), drowning, homicide (101 - 1000), vehicle crashes (1001 - 10,000), cancer and cardiovascular disease (> 10,000 annually). For more information about these statistics visit: <http://talkingbats.blogspot.com.au/> and scroll down to "Why you shouldn't be scared of flying-foxes", posted 18 December, 2010.

To read the complete submission, visit:

<http://www.batsqld.org.au/Documents/Submission%20on%20Land%20Protection%20Bill%2010%20Sept%202012.pdf>

The four species of flying-fox on the farmers' hit list



Little red flying-fox (photo Vivien Jones)



Black flying-fox (photo Vivien Jones)



Grey-headed flying-fox (photo Vivien Jones)



Spectacled flying-fox
(image from internet)

Microbats like it in Sydney's western suburbs

A three-year study conducted by scientist Dr. Caragh Threlfall, has found that the greatest number of insect-eating-microbats inhabit the less-developed suburbs of the city where the soil is good, rather than the sandy national parks.

Sydney's western suburbs, including Penrith, Blacktown Liverpool and Cabramatta, are particularly attractive to microbats, most of which live in the hollows of old trees.

Sydney has about 20 species of microbats, about half of which are listed as threatened.

They make a lot of noise at night, and each species has its own call, but their sounds are too high-pitched for humans to hear and many people mistake them for small birds.

Dr Threlfall surveyed 110 sites across the metropolitan area and she recorded bat calls to identify the species present and placed traps to collect night-time insects.

This food source was found to decrease with decreasing tree cover and increasing housing density, but it increased on better soils, as these soils are more nutrient-rich.

Although national parks have trees and caves for bats to live in, they tend to occur on poorer sandstone soils. On the other hand Sydney's western suburbs were built on rich clay soil, and these areas tend to have greater insect biomass.

Dr. Threlfall concluded, "maintaining tree cover across these productive western suburbs will assist with bat conservation in Sydney."

Note: Caragh was awarded our Elizabeth Hartnell Research Scholarship in 2009 to assist her with her research.

*If you know of students undertaking bat research, please let them know we have funds available annually, for which they can apply:
web@sydneybats.org.au*

Five of the microbat species to be found in Sydney. Our thanks to Michael Pennay for permission to use his photographs.



Chocolate wattled bat



Large-eared pied bat



White-striped freetail bat



Lesser long-eared bat



Gould's wattled bat

Home away from home

Ken Holland

A brief, unauthorised report based on the article "Designing Homes for Tropical Bats", by J. Leighton and Diego Casallas-Pabon published in the Summer 2012 edition of the magazine BATS produced by Bat Conservation International.

The members of the bat family *Phyllostomidae* are more generally known as New World leaf-nosed bats because:

- nobody can spell or pronounce *Phyllostomidae*
- the family inhabits the Americas between south-western USA and Argentina
- its members have really ugly faces, with noses that do not at all resemble leaves

In that wide region between continents dwell more than 150 species of Phyllostimids, exhibiting wide variations in diet, behaviour and facial repugnance. From the human viewpoint they are, in general, useful for:

- pest control (insectivores)
- seed dispersal (fruit bats)
- pollinators (nectar eaters)
- a few carnivores dine on birds, small animals and other bats

In Costa Rica, as seems to be the problem world wide, the forests and the bats are observed to be in decline together, but at least in that nation a concerted effort is underway to reverse that trend. Conservationists there are endeavouring to assist the original forests to reclaim previously cleared land by encouraging the bat population to increase. It is hoped that this can be achieved building strategically-located bat shelters, an idea based on observations that fruit seeds are dispersed by bats in greater numbers in the areas surrounding bat roosts. Could the restoration of forests on abandoned pasture land be assisted by the installation of suitably designed artificial roost structures?

Well, maybe. But the bats seem to be somewhat picky about the arrangement and location of the shelters they are prepared to visit and whether they are to be used for dining and/or sleeping. The need is for the seeds to be dispersed into open country, but for now the bats prefer to camp in the trees.

The jury is out, and the work proceeds.

Sea eagles are often seen over Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve, possibly on the look-out for a tasty meal of flying-fox. Watch sea eagles raising their young, live, at: <http://www.birdlife.org.au/visit-us/discovery-centre/eagle-cam/>

Bat education - new flier and brochure

We all want to emphasise the importance of flying-foxes and the safety of wildlife to the general public. Two recently-produced documents help spread that message. The first is a double-sided flier produced by KBCS and printed free-of-charge by EnviroPrint Australia. Order supplies: web@sydneybats.org.au



This brochure is an A4 triple-folded brochure (cover shown here), produced by Tolga Bat Hospital, Queensland.

This informative brochure explains why netting can be a problem for wildlife and provides guidelines and hints for safely netting garden fruit trees.



More information:
www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com
 If you would like to obtain copies of the brochure:
jenny@tolgabathospital.org

Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve
 Bushcare Group
 meets every Tuesday
 8.30 am - 12.30 pm
 New volunteers always welcome!
 For more information call
 Nancy Pallin 9416 7334
 or email web@sydneybats.org.au

Macksville bats - out of sight, out of mind?

Lyn Burns

Earlier this year, when I was visiting my mother just south of Macksville, I was surprised to hear flying-foxes in the distance. I waited until dusk, looked across the hills to the east, and there they were – thousands of bats flying out.

I have heard since that the camp formed late last year, in November or December, and may have replaced the Bowraville camp. I had also seen a very small camp on the Nambucca River at Macksville last year, which is also empty now. The new camp is in a great place, in the middle of a bushland area where no neighbours are affected by it. The local council is supportive of the camp too, as it is out of the way and bothering no one, and fears that moving it could cause problems.

Unfortunately it is right in the path of the proposed Macksville by-pass for the Pacific Highway. Maybe the Department of Roads and Maritime Services will consider moving the by-pass ... or maybe not!

Flying-foxes - where are they now?

Flying-foxes are on the move back into Sydney, after a winter with many camps unoccupied.

Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve saw 11,000+ fly-out at the last count, early in September. Bats are camped in Centennial Park, Parramatta Park (8000 approx), Kareela (3,500 approx) and small numbers in Avalon and Duck River. Flying-foxes have also returned to Cabramatta Creek after an extended absence (reported by bush regenerators working in the area).

It's also been reported that flying-foxes are returning to roost in the Botanic Gardens, where noise disturbance will, no doubt, be used to move them on, once again.

Their long sojourn down south around Batemans Bay feasting on spotted gum has ended, but flying-foxes are still camped around Tamworth where white box is flowering.

KBCS - keeping busy - what we have been doing recently:

The habitat restoration project continues weekly in KFFR.

We made a submission to NSW government on the review of the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005.

Nancy Pallin & Marjorie Beck talked bats at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Festival. Tim Pearson & Cary Kuiper, under the auspices of AWWP, (walkaboutpark.com.au) attended the Threatened Species Day event in Martin Place, Sydney.

We added our endorsement to the Land Protection Legislation Amendment Bill September 2012, prepared by Dr Carol Booth.

Tim appeared on Channel 9 Mornings program with Luke from AWWP which was a great opportunity for those who don't come into contact with bats to see one up close, if not in the flesh!

KBCS Annual General Meeting 2012

More than 20 members attended this year's AGM, held early in September.

After a light meal and some socialising, Ros Noone conducted the formal part of the evening. The Chairperson's and Treasurer's reports were presented. (If you would like a copy of either of these reports, request them through web@sydneybats.org.au.)

Two committee members decided to retire: Janet Pollock and Marjorie Beck. Nancy thanked Janet for her time and contribution to the committee.

Honorary Life Membership for Marjorie Beck

Nancy announced that the committee had resolved to award Marjorie Beck honorary Life Membership of Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc., for her contribution to educating the public about flying-foxes, her work in the habitat restoration project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve and to the society generally, over 18 years. Marjorie was presented with the recently-published book 'Bats, Working the Night Shift' by Greg Richards and Les Hall.

Election of Office Bearers

Chair: Nancy Pallin

Deputy Chair: Cary Kuiper

Secretary: Ken Holland

Treasurer: Jocelyn Chenu

General members: Mina Bassarova, Lyn Burns, Tim Pearson, Margaret Creenaune, Katherine Russell, Tina Hsu, Jen O'Meara, Leonie Bayley.

We are delighted to welcome four new members to our committee - some "new blood" is just what we need!

The new members are Leonie Bayley, Tina Hsu, Jenny O'Meara and Kath Russell.

Following the meeting Nancy Pallin gave a presentation on the habitat restoration project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. Tim Pearson talked about Hannah (ex-education bat, now resident at Calga, who is about to celebrate her 24th birthday!) and educating people about flying-foxes.

Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Thank you to all our generous donors, whether anonymous or named below. Donations received from July to September 2012:

J & R Abell, M Beck, L Burns, G Cohen, K Cox-Witton, J & L Desmond, B Dowsett, H Dunne, M Eade, N Edards, J Edwards, D & Y Einsinger, J Fairlie-Cuninghame, H Gardner, J Gye, G Hansell, E Jones, N Jones, N Kent, P Langley, B Law, R Leigh, G Limburg, J Madden, L Myers, B Nilsson, C Nolder, Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc., S O'Grady, K Parkhouse, R Pearson, J Pollock, E Oakley, N Pallin, K Russell, C Shuetrim, H Seaton, J Snell, J Southgate, T Spurling, J Stockard OAM, W Suturs, R Tanner, B Taylor, L Toby, E & N Wade, J Walker, M Warner, P Wheatley, J White, A Whitney, A & V Wiggers de Vries, M Wood.

Donations so far this year total \$2660.

Money from the gift fund has been used to continue work in the habitat restoration project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve providing materials and contractors to support the work of our volunteers, as well as keeping our website updated: visit www.sydneybats.org.au to see what we are doing.

Membership renewal

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to renew your membership. Remember that donations are always welcome (donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible).

- If you receive this newsletter by mail, please check the envelope to see if your membership is due.
- If you receive the newsletter by email and your membership has not been renewed, this will be mentioned in the email.
- If you have a query, email: web@sydneybats.org.au



Hannah with Janet Hutchinson at AWWP, Calga, celebrating her 23rd birthday last year. Now approaching the grand old age of 24 she is quite possibly the longest-lived flying-fox in captivity. Plans are underway to celebrate with her in October

Photo: Tim Pearson

Friends of Bats

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