

Friends of Bats

newsletter



Issue 109 June 2013

Shooting Flying-foxes - another step towards ending this cruelty

By Nancy Pallin

From 30 June 2014 the NSW Government Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) proposes to phase out the routine issuing of licences to shoot flying-foxes for protection of commercial fruit crops. Instead, licences may only be issued under **Special Circumstances in NSW. The following summarises the proposal by OEH and is a draft only.**

Special Circumstance Conditions will allow for the issuing of licences to shoot flying-foxes as a crop protection measure for the duration of the incursion*, subject to strict limits.

From July 2014, licences to shoot flying-foxes for the protection of commercial crops may only be issued under the following circumstances:

- Orchardists in the Sydney Basin/ Central Coast or north-east NSW experience an *unprecedented incursion* or are unable to net due to physical or geographic constraints
- Orchardists in other areas of NSW experience an *unanticipated or unprecedented incursion* or are unable to net due to physical or geographic constraints

Each application will be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis to assess its merits and will require the approval of OEH.

An unprecedented incursion is defined as:

flying-foxes impact on a crop that they have never previously been recorded feeding on anywhere in Australia i.e. a crop that is not listed in Table 1. [This table will be published on the NSW Government website].

* 'incursion' means flying-foxes feeding in an orchard

An unanticipated incursion is defined as:

Flying-foxes are present in a local government area (LGA) and impact on fruit crops for three years or fewer within any 10 year period commencing 1 July 2014. These three years may be consecutive or non-consecutive. After a third licence has been issued within a 10 year period for any given orchard, flying-fox damage may no longer be considered an unanticipated incursion for that orchard.

The special circumstance conditions include specific timeframes for the duration of the issuing of shooting licences. These allow reasonable time for orchardists to invest in alternative forms of crop protection (e.g. tunnel nets) or obtain additional capital to cover extra costs of erecting full exclusion nets in difficult conditions. This will allow shooting licences to be phased out completely, without creating an unfair burden on orchardists.

oo0oo

A Sydney Basin orchard field day was held in early June. The Special Circumstances Conditions were explained to orchardists. Additionally, the funding available from the NSW Government for orchardists in the Sydney Basin and Central Coast areas to assist them to install full exclusion netting was further explained. Netting contractors provided advice and participants visited two netted orchards.

oo0oo

KBCS has worked on this issue for a long time -

It is now more than 20 years since Jillian Snell and other members of Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee (now KBCS Inc.) helped organise a Fruit Crop Protection Seminar at Hornsby in April 1992.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc. will hold its AGM:

Tuesday, 20 August, 2013 at 8.00 pm
4 Taylor St, Gordon (corner Waugoola St)

Our special guest will be photographer Vivien Jones from Bellingen.

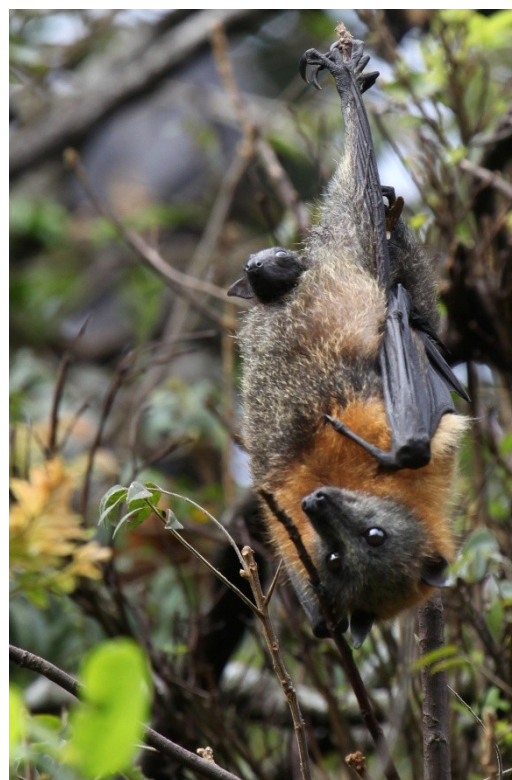
Join us at 7.00 for a light meal and to hear Vivien talk about her experience with flying-foxes.

Vivien's book "Flying-foxes Australian Night Foresters" is due to be published later this year.

RSVP for catering by 15/8/13 to:
web@sydneybats.org.au or call 9498 1420

Below: One of Vivien Jones fantastic photos.

Here, a female grey-headed flying-fox is giving birth - you can see the pup's head emerging!



Visit our website: www.sydneybats.org.au

Fragmentation of flying-fox camps in Sydney

(compiled from information supplied by Peggy Eby)

Before 1989 there were seven flying-fox camps in the Sydney region. They were located around the edges of cleared land (the animals had easy access to both bushland and urban gardens). The camps were empty in winter. Fast-forward to 2013 - there are now 22 camps in the Sydney region. New camps have formed throughout the inner urban area, east from (approximately) Parramatta and also around Sydney's perimeter; some are now occupied through winter.

Why have new camps formed?

Some possibilities are:

1. Change in feeding habitat, e.g. the camp in the Botanic Gardens (RBGS) may have formed in response to an increase in food in the inner urban area, due to changed gardening practices (more native trees in gardens and streetscapes).
2. Disruption to previous camps, e.g. Kareela formed when the camp at Kurnell was abandoned during construction of the desalination plant and is likely to be a replacement site for the Kurnell camp.
3. Several new camps formed during significant food shortages in 2003, 2007 and 2010.

For some camps, (e.g. Duck River) we don't have enough information to understand when or why they formed.

Why are there more camps?

Is it due to an increased number of flying-foxes? – not according to the evidence we have!

Total population estimates of flying-foxes in camps in eastern Sydney have not changed from 1995-2011 and the estimates at Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve have decreased as the numbers roosting in other camps have gone up. Camps in Sydney are now located closer together than they were pre-1989. This means the animals do not have to fly as far to get to their feeding areas and therefore do not require as much food to survive. This is happening all along the south-east coast of Australia.

The feeding movements of a radio-collared animal captured at RBGS illustrate the point. He was captured during the 2010 food shortage – was roosting in RBGS and feeding in *Banksia integrifolia* at Coogee Beach, 8.5 km away. The Centennial Park camp formed during that food shortage, and by changing to roost at this site, the radio-collared animal more than halved the distance he flew to reach his feeding area. This animal (and many others) continued to roost at the Centennial Park camp after the food shortage ended – and continued to fly shorter distances to feed.

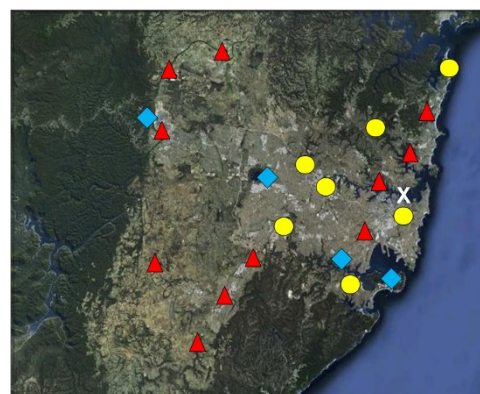
Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve Bushcare Group
meets every Tuesday 8.30 am - 12.30 pm
New volunteers always welcome!
For more information call Nancy Pallin 9416 7334
or email web@sydneybats.org.au



▲ seasonal camps

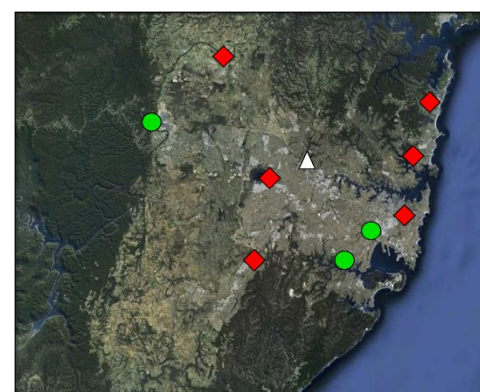
Above: Flying-fox camps in Sydney, pre-1989

Below: Camps in Sydney 2013. The white cross indicates the Botanic Gardens camp, dispersed 2012



● continuous ▲ seasonal ◆ irregular

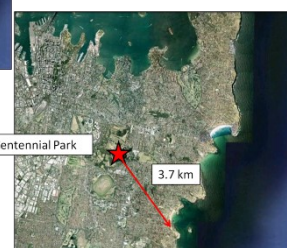
Below: Camps established during food shortages in 2003, 2007 and 2010



△ 2003 ● 2007 ◆ 2010



Left: The trip from RBGS was more than halved by roosting at Centennial Park (below)



'Dispersing' a roost is a misnomer

By Keith Armstrong
www.embodiedmedia.com

A colony of flying-foxes comprises individually-minded animals who will cluster opportunistically or while breeding at sites they innately remember and have marked as their 'temporary stopping place' (i.e. the 'roosts' that we see increasingly fragmenting throughout our towns and cities). In almost all cases, these animals do not in any real sense 'belong' to that single site over the long-term or each other - but range far and wide as the food trees in the vicinity wax and wane: in some cases travelling the length of entire eastern seaboard.

In short, they show amazing fidelity to a roost site - but almost none to the group. Therefore they are not a 'flock' or a 'family' or a 'unit' in the way we might think of some other animals.

Clearly then this tells us that 'dispersal' of a colony is a misnomer, diverting our eyes away from the reality of the matter. In some cases you can potentially disperse something fixed (i.e. a flock that works together) but flying-foxes, by their very nature, cannot actually be 'dispersed'. In fact what we seem to be achieving at best is fragmentation across our communities - the **REVERSE** of what any of us are seeking.

It is essential that councils take on board this concept as every decision they now make regarding flying-fox colonies carries a huge duty of care both to others in their community and localities, but critically also to the entire state and by definition to other Australian States.

This issue is actually going to catch fire rather than cool - and become a huge and unexpected political millstone when it is, and should be, beyond politics. We have the opportunity to make a quite significant turning point now in how we think about living in one of the most biodiverse places on earth.

It is time to conduct a full and proper forum where all stakeholders can get further up-to-speed on the realities of the situation - and begin to think creatively about where to from here.

Flying-foxes - what are they up to?

A fly-out count of flying-foxes held on 12 June, 2013 estimated 16,870 bats currently roosting in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. This is an increase on the estimated 10,230 bats observed in May.

Have you heard or seen flying-foxes feeding at night? What were they feeding on - blossom or fruit? Let KBCS know at web@sydneybats.org.au

Cats can catch bats!

Linda Broome, a Threatened Species Officer with the Office of Environment and Heritage captured some amazing footage of a cat successfully hunting microbats.

This footage was filmed on a motion sensitive video camera during a study of mountain pygmy-possums near Cabramurra.

Follow the link to watch:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nswnationalparks/8635352037/in/set-72157633210338316>

Bats as pets in early white Australian settlement

From John Hunter

The head of this bat strongly resembles that of a fox, and the wings of many of them extend three feet ten inches: Governor Phillip saw one which measured upwards of four feet from the tip of each wing.

Some were taken alive, and would eat boiled rice, or other food readily out of the hand, and in a few days were as domestic as if they had been bred in the house: the governor had one, a female, that would hang by one leg a whole day without changing its position; and in that pendant situation, with its breast neatly covered with one of its wings, it ate whatever was offered it, lapping out of the hand like a cat.

Their smell is stronger than that of a fox; they are very fat, and are reckoned by the natives excellent food.

Hunter, J. 1793. *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*. John Stockdale, London.



A new bat friend

Arabella Lafferty (6yrs) attended a Parramatta Park bat talk in May and was so inspired she took bat pictures she made at the craft table to share with her friends. She made a laminated book using the pictures provided by KBCS. The drawings above are examples of the awesome book that resulted.

Thanks to Arabella for sharing them with us.

KBCS - keeping busy

By Leonie Bayley

• 9 March 2013—Flying Fox Fly out Viewing and Talk

Hosted by David Wilks, Biodiversity Officer, Ku-ring-gai Council & KBCS. Up to 50 people attended a night with the education bats at Gordon Scout Hall.

• 13 April 2013—Parramatta Park -The Dark Night: Bat Talk

Also attracting 50 people was a family night proudly hosted by Parramatta Park Trust, Parramatta City Council and Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc., as part of Australasian Bat Society Bat Night. The event was focused on children and they were encouraged to come along dressed as their favourite bat-inspired superhero and to visit the 'bat cave' for some batty craft activities (see story on page 3). The telescope was on hand with children and adults alike queuing to view the camp on the other side of the weir.

Twilight came and while the light was good everyone moved down to the weir, to watch the flyout and listen to Tim's commentary. It was spectacular! Many skimmed the water for a drink before they went on their journey for dinner. With their keen vision they silently glided over the watchers heads. A beautiful finish to the evening that inspired the participants to request more of these events!

Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Thank you to all our generous donors, whether anonymous or named below. Donations received from April to June 2013:

C. Austin, E. Burgess, G. Limburg, V Waterhouse

Donations so far this year total \$8225.00

Funds are used to support the habitat restoration project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve, employing contractors and providing materials and plants for canopy replenishment. Raising awareness of flying-foxes through our website is also made possible through donations to the Gift Fund.

Visit www.sydneybats.org.au to see what we are doing.

The flying-foxes of Parramatta Park

All KBCS members are invited to come along to a free public information day at Parramatta Park.

If you would like to know more about this colony, join us at the Ross Street Weir and take a close look through our telescopes.

When: 7 July 2013

Location: Ross St Weir, Parramatta Park

Time: 10am-2pm

FREE

For more information contact

web@sydneybats.org.au



Membership renewal now due

Memberships are due for renewal as of 30 June each year. Thank you if you have already renewed yours. Annual membership is \$20.00 (individual or household). If you receive your newsletter electronically, your membership expiry date will be in the email; if by post then please check the envelope for membership expiry date.

And don't forget that donations to our Gift Fund are tax deductible and always welcome.

- You can add a donation to your membership fee if paying by cheque
- you can visit www.sydneybats.org.au and use the "donate" button
- We accept membership fees and donation electronically – contact web@sydneybats.org.au for account details

Friends of Bats

is published quarterly by

Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc.

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