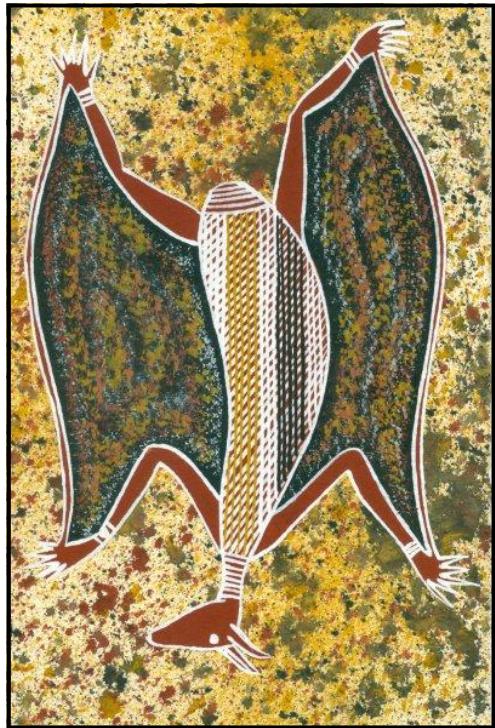


# Friends of Bats

## newsletter

Issue 98, September 2010



Flying Fox by Neil Manyita  
Clan Mardgoo Murrwurruwurr

## Bats and Totemism

Janet Hutchinson

Generally the thought of attending an AGM is high on the ho-hum list. The exception has always been the KBCS AGM with the pleasure of the company of like-minded batty people, a great meal and a guest speaker to bring us up to date with some of the goings on the world of bats.

This year the speaker was Professor Debbie Bird Rose, Professor of Social Inclusion at Macquarie University, who is researching the passions and motivations of people working for the protection of flying foxes.

Debbie spoke about totemism and its meaning to the Aboriginal people.

Debbie's research and time spent with the Aboriginal people has given her an understanding of the deep meaning of the totem (a natural object or animal with a special hereditary relationship to the tribe or individual) and what that totem is to them. The depth and meaning of this relationship is not an easy one for most of us to understand, but Debbie's explanation that members of the same totem share the same blood, the same flesh, the same skin and are one family to the Aboriginal people is a glimpse of an all embracing view of life. Flying-fox is an important totem for some Aboriginal people in northern Australia.

Those of us who are deeply involved with flying-foxes may share some of this feeling.

Something to think about.

## KBCS 2010 Annual General Meeting

Nancy Pallin

Twenty three members attended our AGM; nine apologies were received. Members celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Society. Last year's committee members were re-elected. The committee will call on other members to assist with various projects. Offers of assistance are always welcome.

If you were unable to attend and would like to receive the Annual Report which includes the audited financial statements, use our webmail: [web@sydneybats.org.au](mailto:web@sydneybats.org.au)

## Bats left in peace... for now

The Royal Botanic Gardens Trust announced on 22nd June that the dispersal of the flying-foxes from the Botanic Gardens, expected to start in July, had been postponed until next year.

The postponement was due to the fact that many of the flying foxes captured for tagging were well below their normal weight range. This weight loss is due to poor food availability over the last couple of years. It was considered that the dispersal would have seriously affected the flying-foxes' welfare.

## Congratulations to Catalyst

Nancy Pallin

The ABC TV Catalyst program on September 2 presented flying-foxes fairly.

The media too often emphasises the problems associated with having flying-foxes in our cities and towns and generally wildly exaggerates the threat of disease.

In contrast, Catalyst emphasised the benefits of flying-foxes, illustrating their ecological importance.

They made the point that the real problem is the loss of bat feeding and roosting habitat, which is destroyed by humans. People have encroached into flying-foxes habitat with the resulting conflicts we all know about.

The reality with disease is that we only know of one cont p.2

person who has died from a bite from a flying-fox. She refused to have the post-exposure vaccination which would have protected her from Australian Bat Lyssavirus. Horses have died from Hendra virus and several people have died or became ill due to contact with horses. Research continues, but in the meantime people can protect themselves from these diseases.

KBCS especially thanks Paul Willis and the Catalyst team for presenting a balanced story on flying-foxes.

### **KFFR benefits from Conservation Partners Grant**

Ku-ring-gai Council has received a grant of \$9000 +GST for weed removal and re-establishing roosting trees, from the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water for the 0.45 ha of land added to Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. This grant was made available because this land is permanently protected under a Conservation Agreement. Council will engage a bush regeneration contractor to undertake this work through to 2012.

## **Every little bit helps**

***Quotes captured by Tim Pearson and Cary Kuiper at the National Threatened Species Day event on 7<sup>th</sup> September at the Rocks.***

Many tourists asked why the Botanic Gardens Trust is trying to disperse the bats. They were astonished that the BGT is not making a feature of the bats.

A lot of Sydney locals were stunned to find out that the bats are threatened; their population declining in number and that their increasing numbers in cities is actually a sign of how bad things are.

Usual comments..."I didn't realise how cute they are!" "I've never seen one this close" "Oh my god they're gorgeous!" and the usual "I didn't know that..."

Tim and Cary were showing the four new Calga kids, Luke, Plum, Gidget, and Arial (See FoB No 95 for photos)

which are growing into the next generation of ed bats! The other good news is that four of the Calga bats are pregnant this year: Cally and Fleur, Molly and Bella. If you have the time, do visit them at Australian Walkabout Wildlife Park, Calga. More information at: [www.walkaboutpark.com.au/](http://www.walkaboutpark.com.au/)



Scott Morton

## **Decision to disperse Botanic Gardens bats challenged in the Federal Court**

*Adapted from a Humane Society International press release.*

Bat Advocacy, represented by the Environmental Defenders Office, is challenging the decision by the federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, to approve the dispersal of grey-headed flying-foxes from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney.

Bat Advocacy is concerned that the Minister may not have taken into account very important matters when making his decision." In their view these shortcomings have resulted in a decision that is neither in the interests of the flying-foxes nor the people who live in the vicinity the Royal Botanic Gardens.

The matters Bat Advocacy believes require review include the failure of the Federal Environment Minister to

consider:

- whether the Botanic Gardens is critical habitat for the flying-fox
- the length of the 20 year approval period for the dispersal and
- the social impacts of the relocation, with moving the flying-fox to areas outside the Botanic Gardens almost certainly resulting in conflict within the community.

Bat Advocacy's challenge has wide support in the conservation community.

Humane Society International sees this is a very important case which they hope will help demonstrate the importance of critical habitat for all species, not just the grey-headed

flying-foxes. It is because of these broader implications that HSI is providing financial support to Bat Advocacy to enable them to meet the majority of the inevitable legal costs.

WWF Australia supports the action which, in their opinion, should clarify the importance of critical habitat and the need for greater protection for threatened species from such proposals.

Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society also supports the legal action. We believe that the cumulative impact of the dispersal action over a 20 year span will have profound consequences for the grey-headed flying-foxes population.

# A flying-fox camp management strategy for Maclean



Scott Morton

The history of Flying-foxes at Maclean extends back to the 1880s. In 1890, flying-foxes were reported as a pest in the Maclean reserve and since then have been the target of numerous camp disturbances, including culling.

In August this year, a draft strategy for the management of human and flying-fox interactions in and around Maclean was released by the Maclean Flying-fox Working Group, which includes representatives from government departments, Maclean High School and TAFE, Clarence Valley Council, NSW Health, Country Energy, environmental

and community groups, local residents, and a scientific advisor. This is the first attempt at a comprehensive and integrated management plan for the colony.

The main objectives of this draft strategy are to:

1. Address the concerns of local residents, Maclean High School, TAFE community and the broader community; and
2. Conserve and co-exist with the flying-fox population.

All potential management options for the flying-fox camp have been assessed against a number of criteria including:

- animal welfare aspects;
- scientific validity / previous experience;
- strengths;
- weaknesses;
- estimated costs;
- feasibility

The draft strategy identifies a range of preferred management options and a program of short, medium and long term actions to achieve the objectives. Unfortunately, at this stage, the Working Group has not reached a consensus regarding dispersal of the colony and its inclusion or exclusion from the management strategy.

Overall, the drafting of this management strategy is a positive step. It offers possible methods of reducing conflict between humans and flying-foxes by managing their location and increasing public knowledge. It also aims to identify opportunities to promote positive interactions between the wider community, flying-foxes and their habitat. This strategy however requires constructive co-operation between all stakeholders rather than reacting to problems that arise.

The draft management strategy for Maclean can be downloaded from:

[www.geolink.net.au/index.php?page=Projects\\_display&select=List&rowid=491](http://www.geolink.net.au/index.php?page=Projects_display&select=List&rowid=491)

Scott Morton



## Flying-fox Camp Forum in Brisbane

Nancy Pallin

A forum on the Management and Restoration of Flying-fox Camps was held in July at the EcoCentre, Griffith University, Brisbane. It was organised by Liz Gould from Queensland South-east Catchments.

The forum was facilitated by flying-fox researchers Dr Peggy Eby and Billie Roberts and addressed three broad themes through a series of short presentations and workshops

- Undertaking bush regeneration in flying-fox camps
- Maintaining sustainable flying-fox camps
- Managing (for) people

Experienced practitioners shared their knowledge and experience with local, state and federal government staff, contract and volunteer bush regenerators. Dr Hume Field from Queensland

Bio-security spoke about viruses; there was a presentation on aircraft collisions with wildlife, especially flying-foxes.

Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society was invited to present on Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. Nancy Pallin shared the Society's records of how the flying-fox camp has occupied different parts of the valley since 1970s.

The conclusions from the forum will be used to develop a resource document for flying-fox camp managers and to guide future investigations.



## The Invasive Species Council

has prepared Stopping NSW's Creeping Peril: A community call for action on weeds to outline the weed reforms needed for NSW. This has been prepared by working with experts on weeds and reviewing the scientific literature, current NSW laws, policies and funding.

They plan to promote the document widely, particularly to the major political parties in NSW.

KBCS has endorsed the document because it knows that weeds threaten nearly all flying-fox camps as well as microbat roosts.

Web: [www.invasives.org.au](http://www.invasives.org.au)

## Darwin Conference

**Tim Pearson**  
The 14th Australasian Bat Society Conference was held in Darwin this year. KBCS committee members Tim Pearson and Nancy Pallin attended the conference at their own expense.

Of particular interest was a talk given by Annette Scanlon about the environmental problems in Fiji and the **servicing role of megabats for rainforest trees** (genus Dillenia). They pull the outer petals off the flower to get at the nectar. This allows the tree to be pollinated and set fruit. But the research showed that the smothering of trees by a native vine and rats chewing fruits are leading to lack of pollination and germination. To enable bats to do their pollinating job, major work to control pests has to be done.

This presentation is very relevant to forest management as it acknowledged that although the smothering vine is a native one, it got out of control when the forest was damaged by forestry operations that allowed light to the understorey over a vast area. These vines evolved to take advantage of gaps in the canopy when one old tree died and collapsed – not the removal of thousands of mature trees.

Hume Field presented on **Hendra and bat-borne zoonotic diseases in general**. One of Hume's hypothesis is that zoonotic diseases have a long history. For most species it's an old, old problem, e.g. rabies from dogs, plague from rats, measles from cows, whereas it's only recently that we have had increased contact with bats.

Heather Baldwin presented her

research on **grey-headed flying-fox population genetics**. She sampled animals from five different camps along the coast and performed full DNA analysis. Her work confirms earlier conclusions from Protein and Mitochondrial DNA analysis that there is a single population. This has been questioned before but now it seems to be incontrovertible. The conservation and management implication is, of course, that one can't view any camp as a single isolated entity.

Trish & Terry Wimberley showcased the facility they have built at their property on the Gold Coast hinterland – **The Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** – and how they dealt with a mass abandonment of pups in 2008. The centre looks mind-blowing, and they have support from a number of vets on the Gold and Sunshine

coasts, as well as a big staff of volunteers.

Michael Pennay presented on **Thermal imaging and missile tracking software used to count microbats** leaving and returning to a cave entrance. It automatically added and subtracted them with high accuracy.

Lindy Lumsden presented on the failed attempts to save the Christmas Island Pipistrelle (the 1<sup>st</sup> mammal to become extinct in Australia in the last 50 years), the lessons learned and how future extinctions could be prevented. A positive of this event, is that the Federal Government has set up captive programs for many of the endemic reptiles on CI, which are also in rapid decline. So losing one species may have been the catalyst to put in place programs to save others before they get critical.

## Updated information on grey-headed flying-fox

The NSW Department of Environment Climate Change and Water has updated their information on grey-headed flying-foxes, with an informative brochure and website links to a wealth of material:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/flyingfoxes.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/flyingfoxes.htm)

Highlights include: In 2010, many grey-headed flying-foxes have been found roosting and foraging outside traditional areas. Some have been found as far inland as Orange and as far south-west as Adelaide. Researchers speculate that these far-ranging movements of flying-foxes this year is most likely to be related to food scarcity due to the extremely wet weather which has led to major flooding of inland rivers. They are not sure such movements will be repeated.

On the Threatened Species website (developed by DECCW as part of its role in administering the [NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act](#)), the grey-headed flying-fox species profile has also been updated. It includes lists of trees on which the flying-foxes depend for food and vegetation communities where they are found.

[www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile/profile.aspx?id=10697](http://www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile/profile.aspx?id=10697)

## Friends of Bats

is published quarterly by

Ku-ring-gai

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## Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Donations received from June to September 2010 totalled \$3027, received from:

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**Thank you all for your generosity!**

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible - receipts are mailed with the next newsletter unless otherwise requested.