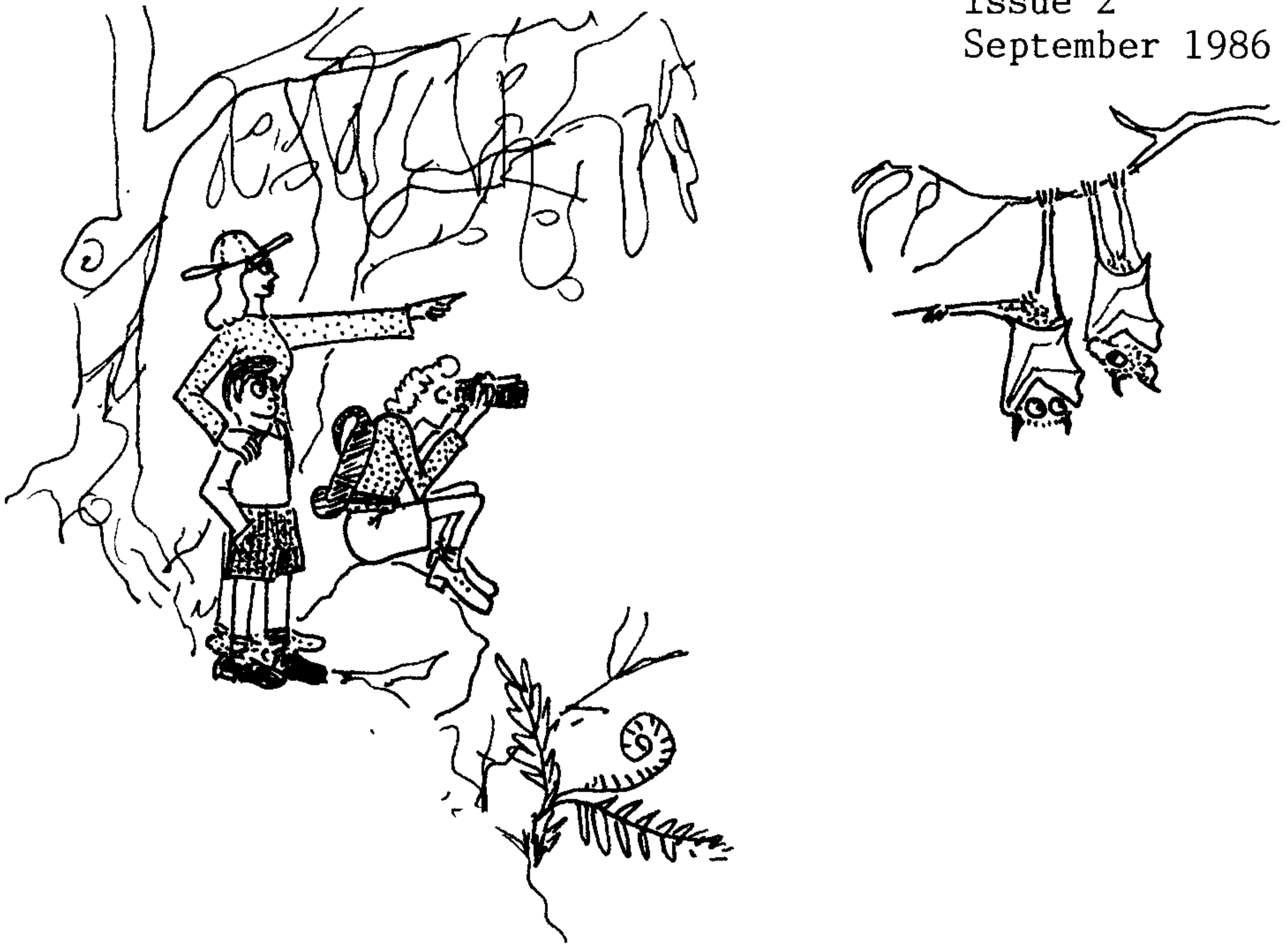


NEWSLETTER  
of the  
FRIENDS OF BATS

Issue 2  
September 1986



It is gratifying to our Committee that there has been such an immediate response to this Newsletter. Already 92 members have enrolled as Friends of the Bats.

All "Friends of Bats" are invited to watch the flying foxes leave their valley, view the audio/visual Bats - Myth and Reality and meet a friendly flying fox.

on Saturday 18 October, at the bat colony

from 5pm at the end of Edward Street, Gordon,  
from 6pm on Rosedale Road bridge, then at a nearby  
scout hall. Enquiries regarding transport etc.  
Ring 4671334 or 4981663 Supper provided. R.S.V.P.

## BATS AROUND THE WORLD

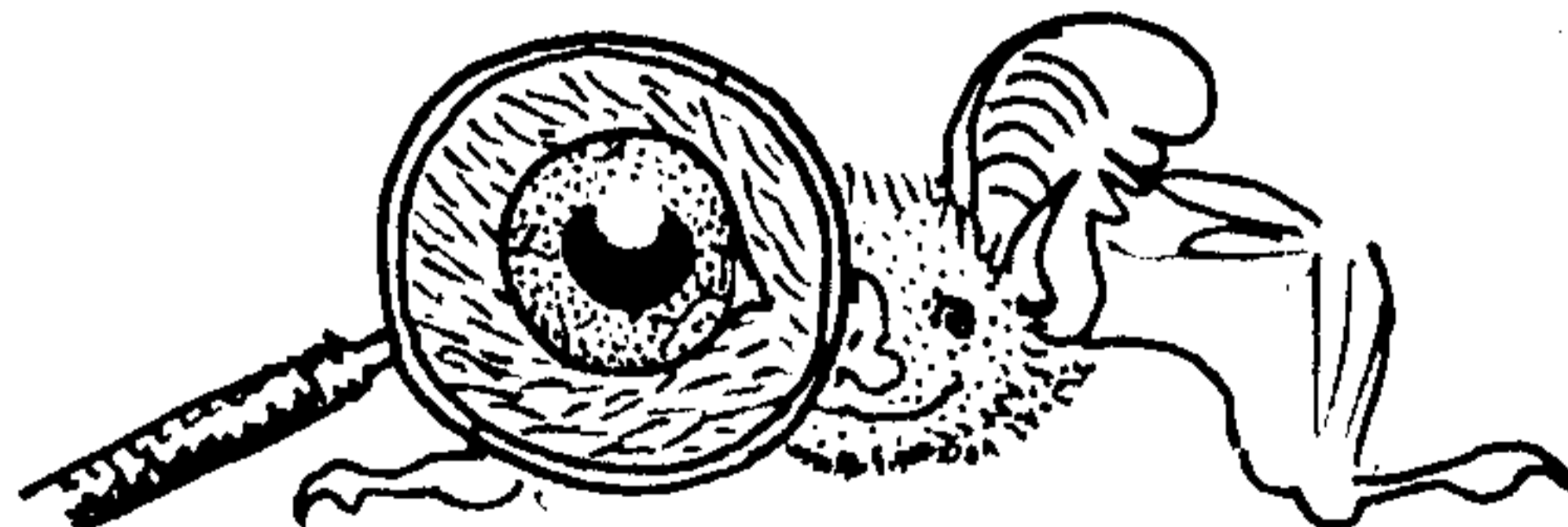
The largest bat colony in the world is in Texas, U.S.A. where 20 million Free-tail Bats live in the Bracken Cave. Bat Conservation International Inc. has set up its headquarters near this spectacular wildlife site.

For those who wish to support world wide efforts to protect bats you can join

Bat Conservation International Inc.  
c/- Brackenridge Field Laboratory  
University of Texas, Austin, TX78712, U.S.A.

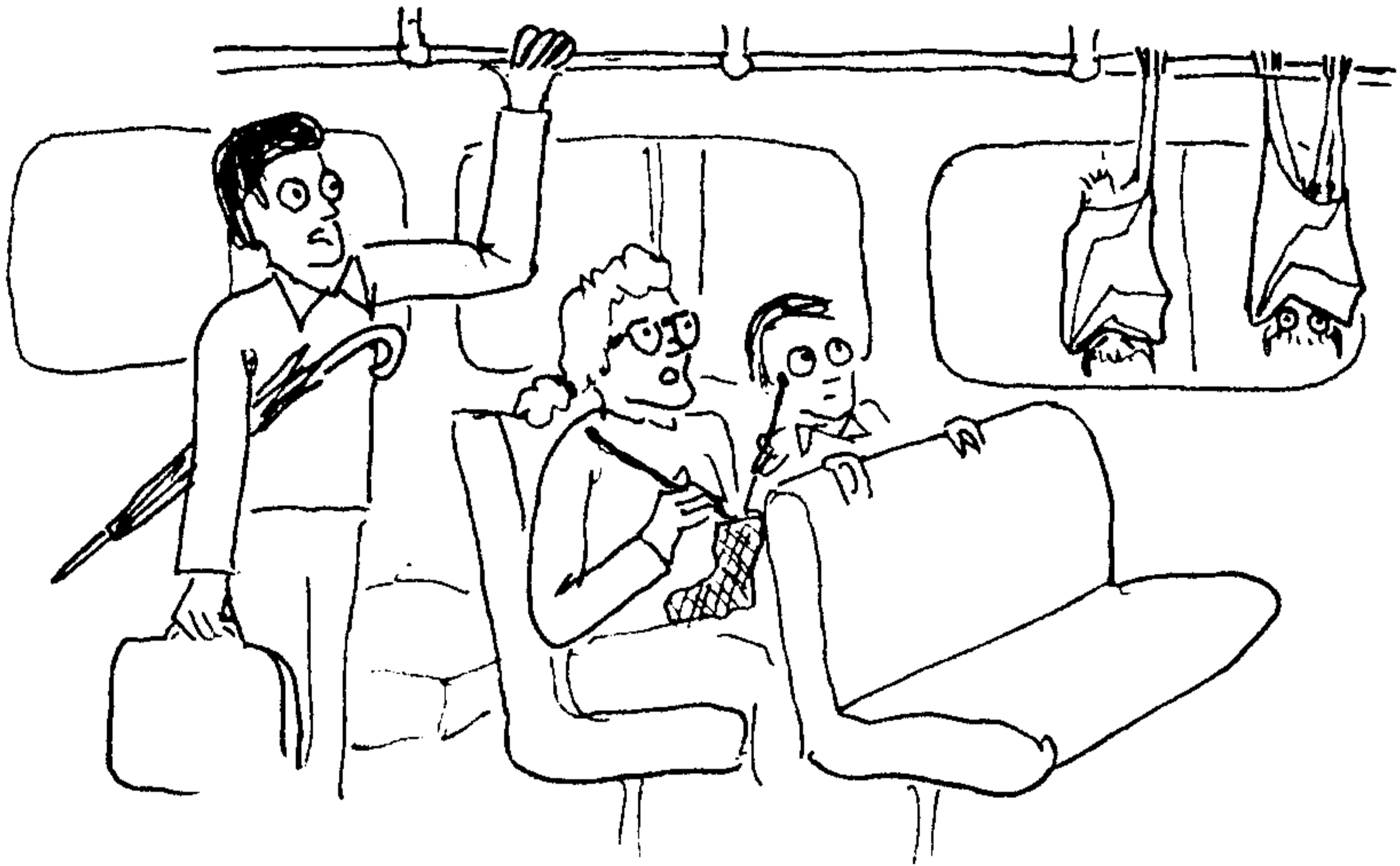
The bat colony in Kolovai, TONGA, is a tourist attraction because of its place in local legend. Bats are said to have been a love gift from Hina, a Samoan maiden, to Ula, one of the island's ancient chiefs. Ula had sailed by canoe to the Samoan Islands and brought the bats, including a single white bat, to Tonga. Local people also say that white bats appear just before a member of the royal family dies and vanish after the burial.

NEW ZEALAND has two unique bat species, the Greater and Lesser Short Tailed Bats Mystacina robusta and M. tuberculata. These species use burrows, either their own or those of seabirds, to roost and breed. They are unusual because they are agile on the ground where they feed on insects in the leaf mulch. They also eat flowers, fruit and carrion - as well as catching insects in the air.



Despite the phrase "blind as a bat", all bats have eyes and can see. Folk lore is not a sure source of fact.

## OUR ITINERANT BATS



It does seem that people are becoming more aware of bats and seemingly more intent on preserving their habitat and the creatures themselves.

So, it is not surprising that the Melbourne Age reported the presence of bats in Melbourne - in the city itself.

800 bats took up residence in the fern gully in the Botanic Gardens. It seems that their diet there comprised Eucalyptus nectar, Moreton Bay figs and blood plums.

As in Sydney they travel across the city in search of food, travelling up to 10 km.

Their visits seem to be sporadic; last time they migrated to Melbourne was in 1982 and then not again until November 1985. They stay mainly for the period of the southern summer.

## JUNIORS' JOTTINGS

These poems were sent to us by JAN TOLLEY of Engadine. They were written as a result of a visit by Nancy Pallin and Rosslyn Jeffery to her after school creative writing class. There was no time for polishing or editing.

### BATS

Bats are really friendly creatures,  
They have many fascinating features,  
They have wide wings and cling to most things,  
They have a cute little pouch,  
On trees they crouch.  
Bats should not be kept in cages,  
They're very small - at all ages.

By Deborah Wilson 11 years

(Bats are placental mammals, not marsupials and therefore do not have pouches. However, we do understand that the demands of rhyme are not easy. Ed.)

### FRUIT BATS

I like fruit bats, though they are a bit smelly.  
They smell like rotten fruit.  
They have cute faces with fluffy fur around their necks  
and black button noses.  
Their wings feel like rubber. They have five fingers  
on each arm, shoulder, and elbow.  
Fruit bats live in colonies, hanging upside down in  
trees. They eat fruit and with their long tongues,  
suck the nectar from the flowers.  
The bats clung onto me with their longish claws. They  
scratched, but it didn't hurt.  
I think bats are cute and should be protected. We  
should all learn to live peacefully with them.

By Fiona Baker 10 years

## BAT FOODS

### (1) Turpentines Syncarpia glomulifera

Bats feed on the pollen and nectar of the turpentine which can grow to 50 m high.

Its bark is fissured, stringy, brown and texture is fibrous. The fruit is distinctive and fused into a woody head. The flowers have prominent stamens of a creamy colour. The tree is common in the Sydney region and helps provide food for the Ku-ring-gai Colony. The flowering period is in Spring.

A tall stand of Turpentines near Link Road and Mona Vale Road, St. Ives, Sydney has been retained as a result of submissions prepared by the Bat Committee and Ku-ring-gai Bushland & Environmental Society.

### (2) Moreton Bay Figs Ficus macrophylla

The purple fruit of this tree (purple with white spots) when ripe is a favourite of the Grey-headed Flying Fox. The tree has a buttressed trunk in common with many other rainforest trees. These broad-leaved trees have been planted in city parks such as Centennial Park, Hyde Park and the Domain.

### (3) Lilly Pilly Amena smithii

Mainly a tree of coastal districts of the East Coast. Its bark is brown and scaly. This rainforest tree has glossy leaves and cherry-like white and purple berries. After the white flowers the edible fruits form; about 1.5 cm across, with one large seed and very tempting pulp. These edible berry fruits are sought after by bats. Berries cover the tree from January to March.

You can ensure adequate natural food for flying foxes by protecting such native trees or planting new ones.

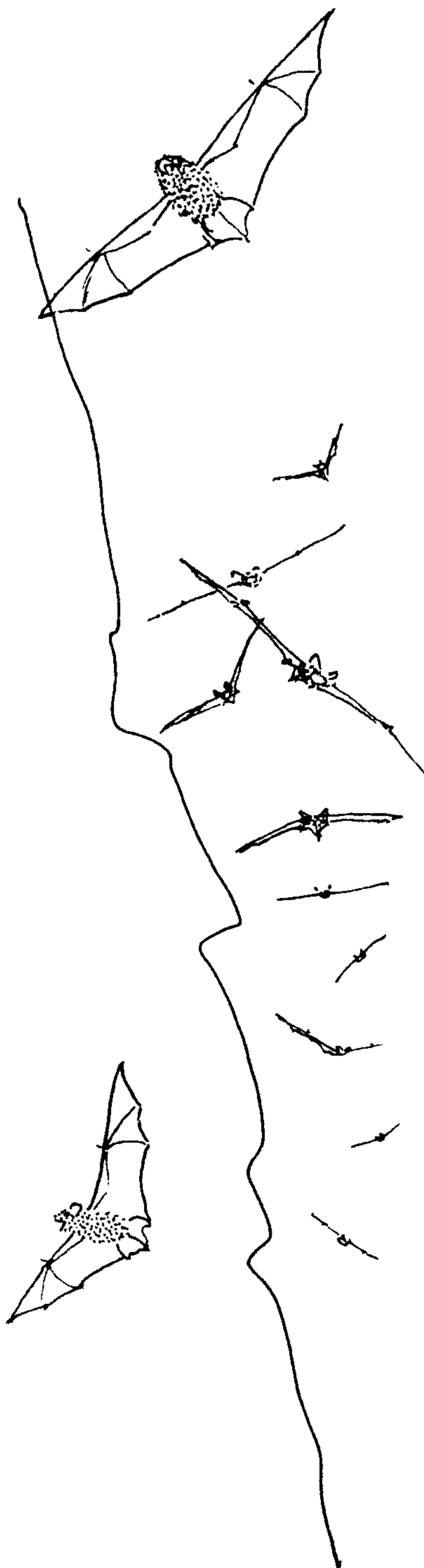
## THE MOUNT ETNA BAT COLONY

Driving north from Rockhampton, past the turnoff to Yeppoon, you can look up and see an enormous conical mountain, Mt Etna. It's green and lush on the roadside, blasted and quarried for limestone to feed the Queensland Cement Company's Rockhampton cement works on the other. This quarrying began in the mid 1960's and continues despite concern over destruction of both Mt Etna's 46 limestone caves and of the bat colonies they house.

Speleologists (cave-keen people) have argued that it is unnecessary to mine Mt Etna because limestone is readily available elsewhere in Queensland but that the state has only three significant limestone cave sites, the other two in the far north and quite inaccessible.

Zoologists worried about the bats for which, they said, Mt Etna was unique and irreplaceable. Each November, after a long journey, an estimated 250,000 Bent-wing Bats swarm to Mt Etna's Bat Cleft Cave. The females leave their mates and descend the deep, predator-proof shaft of the cave entrance to give birth at the bottom. Their hairless young need the cave's warm moist atmosphere. Mt Etna is nursery to an estimated 80% of Australia's Bent-wing Bats.

Miniopterus australis



Nor did Rockhampton's farmers want the bat colony smithereened: a tiny Bent-wing Bat, weighing just seven or eight grammes, eats about half its body weight in insects each night. The whole colony relieved farmers of about a tonne of insects a night.

The speleologist/zoologist/farmer alliance thought it might save Mt Etna's bats when, in 1968, a Queensland Government inquiry recommended that Mt Etna be declared a national park. But the recommendation hit the archives.

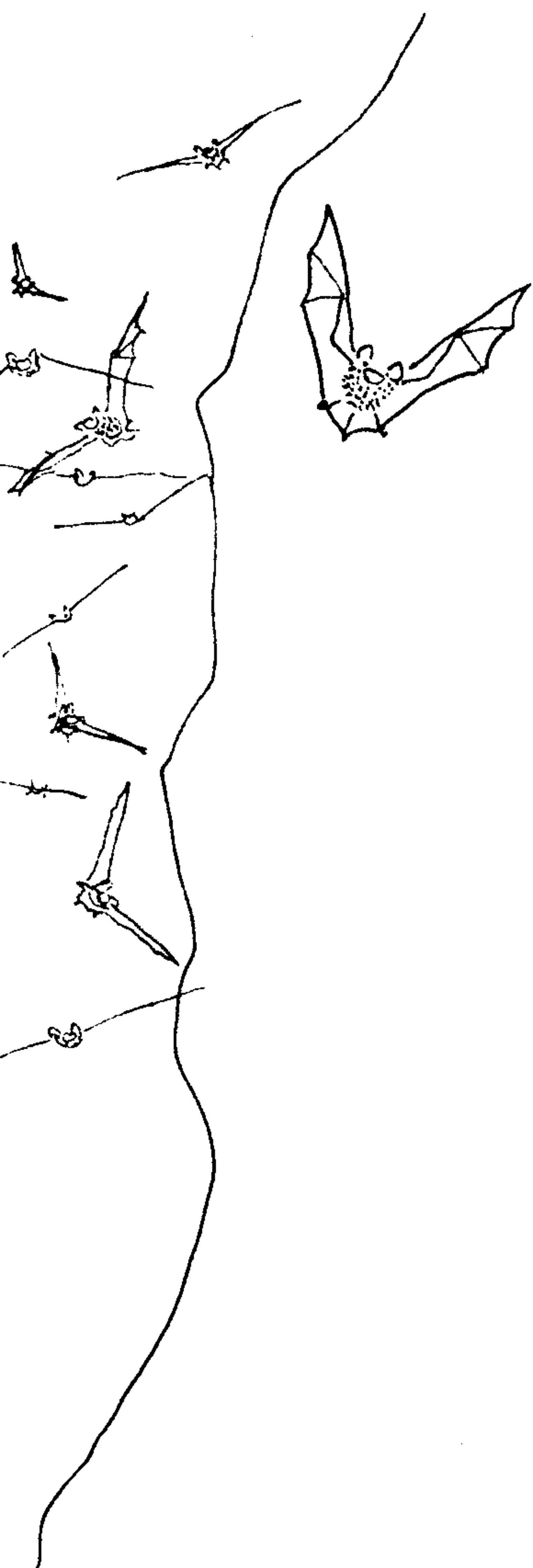
By 1979, when the Queensland Mines Department released a report that said that, indeed, other sources of limestone were available, zoologists had found that Mt Etna also had possibly the world's largest colony of the very rare Ghost Bat.

Macroderma gigas

Quarrying has continued but Bat Cleft Cave is still the Bent-wing's nursery - perhaps because they had nowhere else to go.

Today I'm not sure what's happening. A phone call to the Queensland Department of Mines established that mining leases are current at Mt Etna but that I would have to write and pay fees to learn more. I've done so, and will report the result in the next Newsletter - if I have by then received a reply.

Coralie Creevey



BOOK REVIEW by Ross Pearson

The Lives Of Bats  
by Wilfried Schober  
Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984.

Special to  
Bat Friends  
\$35  
R.R.P. \$48

from

** Shepp Books 'WE SEARCH THE WORLD'**  
**605 Pacific Highway, Mt. Colah, NSW, 2079 Phone (02) 476 3712**

This is a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of bat life and is an ideal reference book for all who are interested in these mammals.

Is the bat bird or mammal, deity or demon?

There are worldwide varying beliefs about the place of bats in the natural order of things. In Finland for example, mythology has it that the soul leaves the body and flies about in the form of a bat.

The author goes on to question "Are bats flying mice?" In Germany they have the name Fledermaus, "flittermouse".

He considers palaeontological research where there is evidence of bats in the Middle Eocene epoch - 50 million years old!

The story develops to cover the principles of bat flight - fruit bats can fly at 15 to 30 km per hour. Distribution is examined - there are 175 species (of fruit bat???) at least. Where Bats Live covers tree dwelling bats (some even roost amongst the roots), bats which dwell in natural caves (a colony of 300,000 lives in the NIAH CAVE in SARAWAK).

The diet of bats is examined; indeed there is little missed in this detailed work. It is strongly recommended.



## HELEN'S HAPPENINGS

Many bats land on electric wires and, if they touch a second wire, are immediately electrocuted. In some American states spacers are fitted between the wires to protect larger birds of prey by ensuring that the distance between wires is too great for the bird to place a foot on each. The same technique could be used in Australia to save bats, and to save linesmen from the task of removing dead bats and birds.

"Help I will need help.

Are you prepared to foster a baby Grey-headed Flying Fox under my guidance for 3 months and then return it to me for release when it is full grown. Foster parents needed from October to December. Phone me, 4579827



To protect their livelihoods orchardists sometimes spread nets over their trees. But bats become entangled in the net and must be cut free. Some die later because their wings have been damaged or from dehydration. Spreading the net on a frame could protect trees AND bats because the bats would simply bounce off.

In my cages a Grey-headed Flying Fox and a Black Flying Fox, have borne twins. An abandoned twin of one species has been known to be suckled by another.

The Editor will be pleased to receive your letters and articles for this newsletter and where possible these will be printed. 4 issues of "Friends Of Bats" will be published each year and distributed in September, December, March and June. Subscriptions are banked in a Building Society Account.

The address for articles and letters is:

R.A. Pearson  
24 Bayswater Rd  
Lindfield NSW 2070

**A Community in Action  
The Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee**

In February 1985 the K.B.C.C. was established at the invitation of the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai to various community groups and individuals who had indicated their interest in the preservation of the bat colony at Gordon, Sydney and the regeneration of the native flora in the Stony Creek Reserve.

The community groups represented are Ku-ring-gai Bushland and Environmental Society, West Pymble Bushland Society and The Wilderness Society. The individuals include a close neighbour of the colony and all bring a variety of expertise to the Committee.

The Committee's initial aim was to raise funds to assist Ku-ring-gai Council pay for this land however it was soon realised that the real need was for a long term management plan.

This month we have applied again for a Community Employment Program Grant to commence removal of weeds and planting of replacement canopy trees at the colony

in Gordon. This kind of outdoor work provides a great sense of satisfaction and we hope that we can train 2 groups of 6 unemployed people in this skilled manual work. We trust that this application will be successful.

The aims of this 12 member Committee are

to increase the awareness and appreciation of bats, especially the Grey-headed Flying Fox, amongst Australians,

to commence management of the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony by regenerating the native vegetation and addressing the problems of close neighbours of the colony,

and to raise funds sufficient to carry out these aims.

In January 1985 the Heritage Council and Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council decided to jointly purchase the 2 residential blocks which were being subdivided for housing. This action protected the trees where young bats are born each spring. It enlarged the Stoney Creek Reserve and placed a buffer zone between bats and some residents in Edward Street. In addition, these blocks provide the only reasonable remaining access to the Reserve.

Dr. Merlin Tuttle, President of Bat Conservation International visited Sydney in December 1985. During his visit to the Ku-ring-gai Colony he said that it was exceptional as the steep valley enables the bats to be viewed at eye level rather than as silhouettes far above the viewer's head. He considers this colony to be deserving of world heritage status.

Flying foxes are now protected fauna in N.S.W. with the same status as kangaroos, wombats, lyre birds etc. We thank Dr. Tuttle for his representation to the Minister for Planning and Environment.

## ACTIVITIES FOR BAT LOVERS

Visit the Bat Colony with 'Friends of the Bats' on 18 October. R.S.V.P. by 15 Oct. (see enclosed form)

\* \* \*

Bat talks may be arranged for your group with  
The Secretary  
Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee  
45 Highfield Road, Lindfield 2070  
(02) 467133 or (02) 457 9827

\* \* \*

Would you like a Bat T-Shirt?  
polycotton \$10, all cotton \$11.50  
phone Rosslyn Jeffery (02) 467 2182

\* \* \*

New sticker design - Forests Need Flying Foxes 50c

\* \* \*

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the delightful contribution by Martyn Robinson of his drawings in the newsletter.

\* \* \*

Next issue - Bats of the North Coast of NSW.  
Articles and illustrations by our younger members, we hope, will become a regular feature.

The address for subscriptions/donations is:

The Treasurer  
Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee  
11 Warandoo St  
Gordon NSW 2072

Annual subscription to F.O.B. is \$6.