

NEWSLETTER

of the

FRIENDS OF BATS

Issue 3

December 1986



This attractive design, emphasising the ecological interdependence of flying foxes and the trees of our forests will be printed on sloppy joes in several colours. A price has not been determined yet but we hope it will be around \$20.

Thank you Paul Stannish for this artwork which is of very high quality (much better than the reduced photocopy above.) An indication of orders for the sloppy joes would be appreciated by Rosslyn 4672182.

Due to the enthusiastic response to the October visit to the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony another visit will be arranged for March. Over 60 people enjoyed seeing the bats leaving their valley, watched Dr. Tuttle's wonderful slides and were sniffed by a friendly flying fox.

#### NEXT OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT

#### THE KU-RING-GAI BAT COLONY

Date Saturday March 21

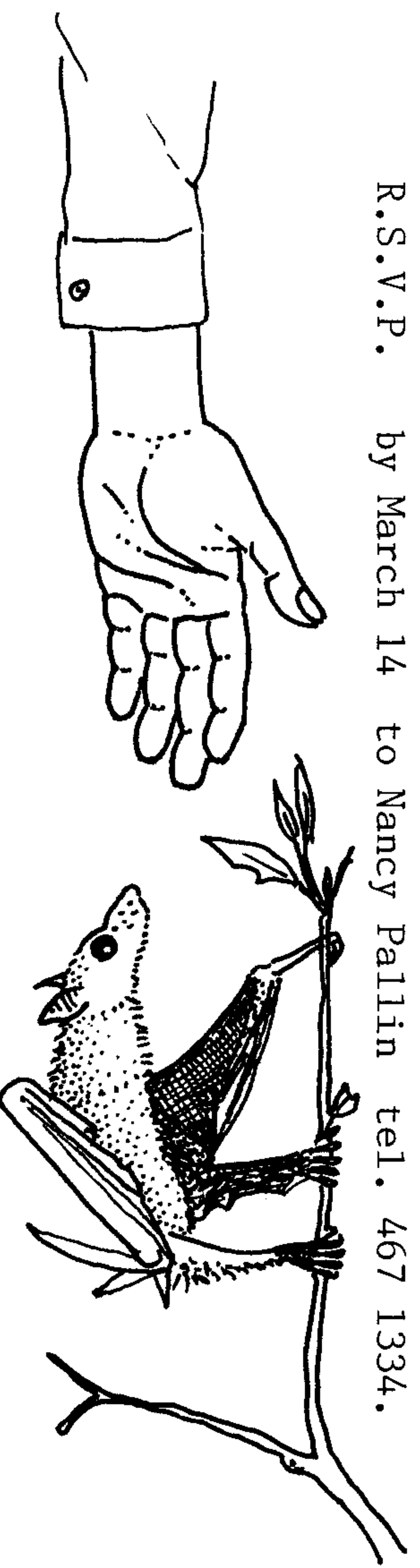
Time 5.30 pm, at end Edward Street, Gordon,  
expect bats to fly at 6.30pm.

Bring your binoculars, supper provided,  
donation appreciated.

Speaker Helen George will speak on Australian Flying  
Foxes and will be happy to answer questions on  
the hand rearing of native fauna.

A set of Australian bat slides are being collected for  
visits to schools and community groups.

R.S.V.P. by March 14 to Nancy Pallin tel. 467 1334.



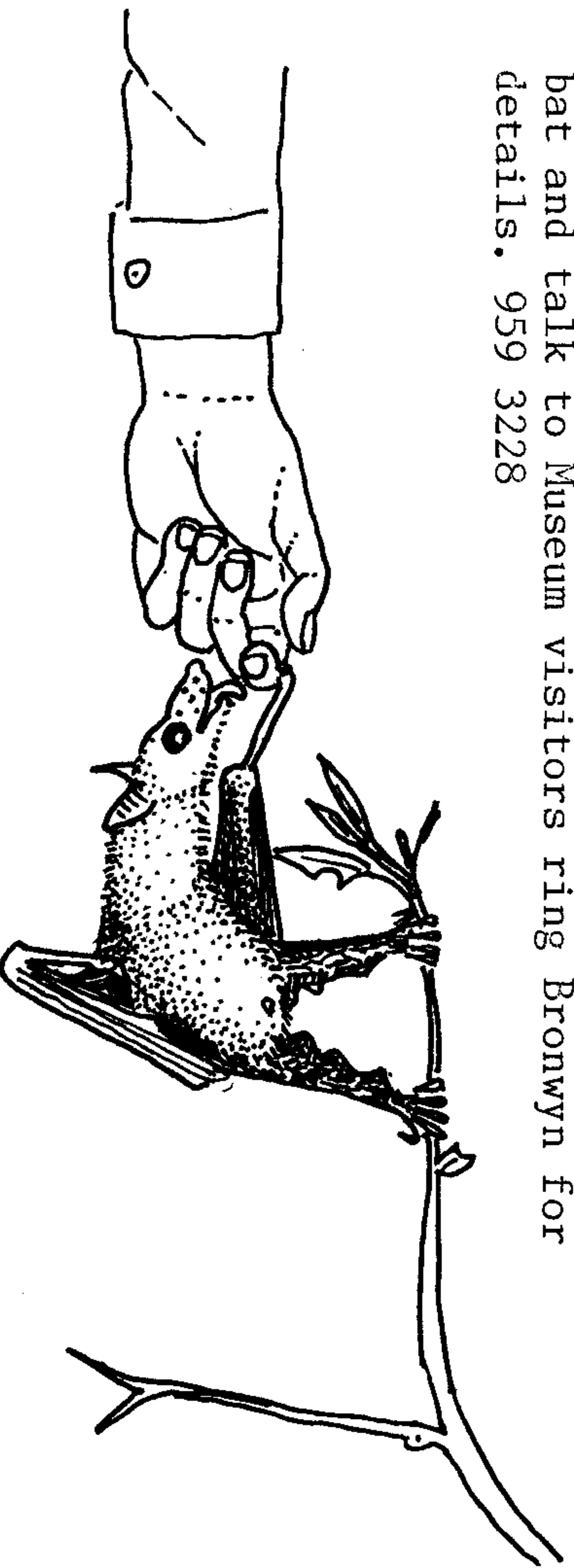
#### GIVE BATS A HAND

"Friends of Bats" subscriptions have risen to 150. You are invited to help the bats by encouraging more people to join. Enclosed is a membership form. As membership rises so does our political clout.

**The KU-RING-GAI BAT COLONY COMMITTEE  
(also known as K.B.C.C.) NEEDS A HAND TOO !**

When Committee members speak at community meetings or schools they would be pleased to have another person to help with carrying equipment, selling t-shirts, and holding a bat. Offers of help for occasional day or evening visits would be greatly appreciated by speakers. Let Nancy know 467 1334.

In the last school holidays the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee displayed photographs, slides and our friendly Grey-headed Flying Foxes at the Australian Museum. The new **DISCOVERY ROOM** is well worth visiting and in March for a few days, we will again introduce bats to the public there. If you would like to hold a bat and talk to Museum visitors ring Bronwyn for details. 959 3228



The fear of bats is quite real within the human population and it is only by replacing it with knowledge and understanding that all bats will have a safe place in the environment. A few hand reared animals are doing an effective public relations job for the wild populations.

Any person keen to work hard on behalf of bats is invited to contact Elizabeth 4981663 or Nancy 4671334 about joining the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee.

## KU-RING-GAI BAT COLONY IS THREATENED

As many F.O.B.s members will have seen in October the weed growth in the colony is strangling many trees. The vegetation in the gully has changed over the years. There are many dead trees and the native understorey has been replaced by dense weed (Privet, Lantana, Morning Glory, Wandering Jew). Nutrient rich drainage from streets and homes favours and accelerates this growth.

The trees are dying and few young trees are able to germinate and grow through the dense layer of weeds. Thus the forest is doomed. The consensus of experts is that few of the large trees will be alive in 15 - 20 years.

We assume the bats chose this site because the steeply sloping valley gives shelter from westerly and southerly winds. The bats roost mainly on the western side of the gully, where they are able to take advantage of the very early morning sun. However, once flying foxes use a camp regularly even regular shooting does not move them away. (see Wingham report)

## K.B.C.C. FAILS TO OBTAIN FUNDING FOR BUSH REGENERATION

In 1985 our applications to the Bicentennial Authority and the Community Employment Program were unsuccessful although we reached the short list on the first occasion. In 1986 we again applied for a smaller C.E.P. grant and approached two corporations for sponsorship, still without success.

Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council has offered assistance with drainage to the creek, removal of rubbish, supply of herbicide and spray equipment. Council is not able to help with employment at present although in the long term their bushland management teams should be able to care for the regenerating bush at the colony.



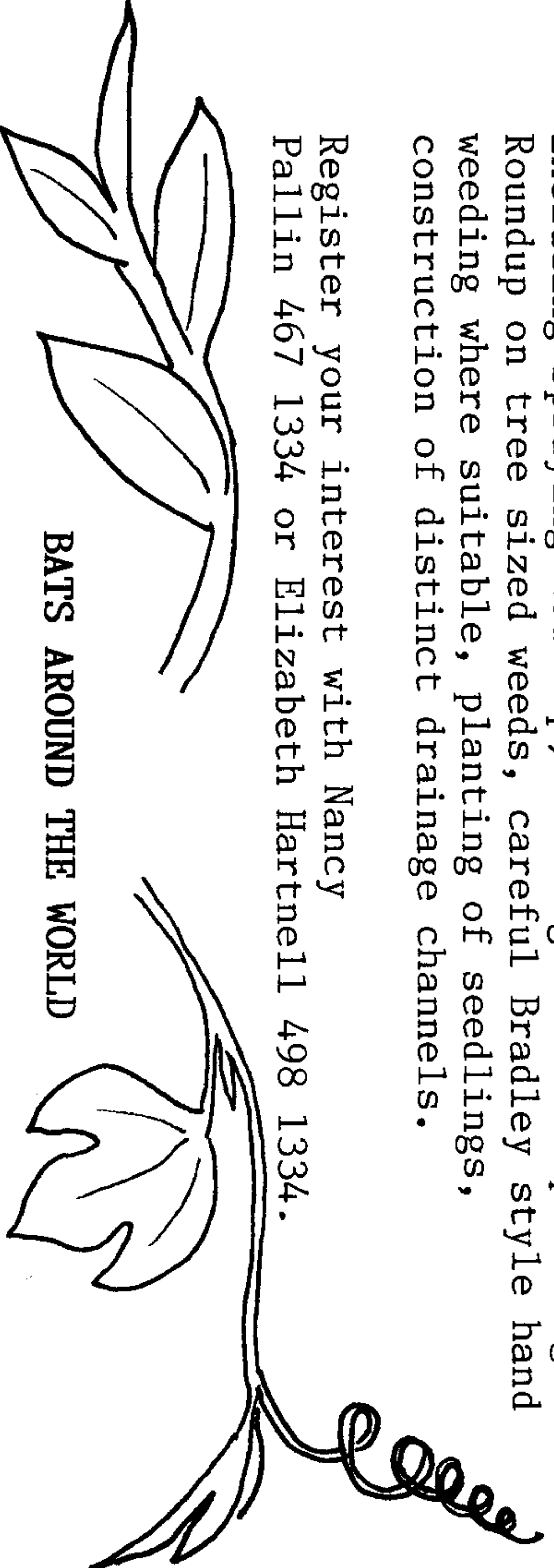
**URGENCY** The weed, Morning Glory has climbed the trunks of many trees and will begin to smother the canopies this summer if no action is taken.

K.B.C.C. is proposing to start with a volunteer team early in 1987. Ideally the same people would work for about 5 hours on 1 day per week.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN A REGULAR VOLUNTEER TEAM TO RESTORE THE HABITAT OF THE BAT COLONY ?**

No previous knowledge required but you must be willing to learn on the job. A variety of methods will be used including spraying Roundup, cutting bark and painting Roundup on tree sized weeds, careful Bradley style hand weeding where suitable, planting of seedlings, construction of distinct drainage channels.

Register your interest with Nancy  
Pallin 467 1334 or Elizabeth Hartnell 498 1334.



### **BATS AROUND THE WORLD**

North east of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean is the tiny island of **RODRIGUEZ** and here there is a small colony of fruit bats. They live in a very small mangrove forest which is threatened by the desperate need the islanders have for firewood. These bats feed on Jack Fruit which to us has a foul smell. The survival of this species of bat depends on their forest habitat remaining undamaged.

In **BRITAIN** there is increasing awareness of the need to protect bats and this year has been nominated as National Bat Year. There are in Britain sixty bat groups and in a later issue we will detail some of their activities. Britain has many species of insect eating bats but no flying foxes.

## FLYING FOX PERSECUTION AT WINGHAM

The following is extracted from a letter by John Stockard, a resident of Wingham:-

"Council organised the first shoot of flying foxes at Wingham in 1899, with random shooting commonplace well before then. Casual shooting was halted in 1915, following complaints that birds as well as bats were being destroyed, bullets were falling on nearby houses, and a terrible stench was arising from the dead bats.

The shooting, now better organised, continued, involving Council, rifle clubs and the police department. Following an organised "raid" on flying foxes in November 1930, the bats inexorably returned in 1931, with the Council inspector recommending that the flying-fox camp be destroyed. The bats continued to return to Wingham Brush, however. After the destruction of nearby camp sites at Mondrook, Bushy Mountain and Kimbriki, there was nowhere else to go.

Bat hysteria reached new heights when, on 9th December, 1961 a referendum calling for the destruction of the southern half of the Wingham Brush was attached to the general election:

'Having regard to the nuisance and health menace caused by flying fox, are you in favour of the removal of Wingham Brush on the south side of Isabella Street.' The major argument against this referendum was that the bats would only move across to the northern side of Isabella Street. Fortunately, 75% of residents voted against the referendum. However, two months later ... 9,000 rounds of ammunition were fired at flying-foxes in the Brush by experienced marksmen. 1300 carcasses were collected, mainly by school children at 1d each with many more left dead and dying among the branches and undergrowth. As one of the shooters remarked to me recently 'You couldn't miss them. I don't think I ever missed a shot'.

The bats continued to return to Wingham Brush as a matter of survival, and these shoots continued. In 1970, there was a full scale assault by 20 members of the local gun club with ammunition provided by Council and the shoot supervised by police."

This sad saga is based on ignorance of the animal's habits. Now it is recognised that flying foxes are valuable pollinators and seed dispersers in our forests. Their colony sites are now protected in N.S.W. and are attracting tourists to those areas.



BUSH REGENERATION AT WINGHAM

John Stockard has been instrumental in the rescue of Wingham Brush which is the largest of two remnants of lowland rainforest in the Manning River basin (8 hectares). Since 1980 he has led a bush regeneration team which has cut and poisoned the strangling vines and given the rainforest a new lease of life. The recovery of the forest is spectacular.

#### K.B.C.C. VISITED WINGHAM

Helen George and Nancy Pallin arrived in Wingham in November with a friendly flying fox and 6 orphan babies in a basket. In 2 days they visited 5 schools in Wingham and Taree, were interviewed by radio, television, the Manning River Times and attended a Greater Taree City Council meeting.

It is hoped Wingham and Taree will come to appreciate their bats and will benefit from tourists who are fascinated by them.

## HELEN'S HAPPENINGS

Some of the bats I have cared for have been given names. Now most have bat banding numbers issued by the Commonwealth Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.

Peter was brought to me by a National Parks and Wildlife Service Ranger in the spring of 1978. The umbilical cord was still attached so I knew he was only a day or so old. As I could find out little information on the rearing of flying foxes from vets, the zoo or in books I had to immediately develop a diet and techniques for caring for this orphan myself.

I tried a formula based on condensed milk. Peter communicated his satisfaction at mealtimes by making 'purring' noises. Quickly he grew into a lively and friendly flying fox.

Peter can and does fly away for visits to his friends, perhaps to the bat colony at Gordon. He has been away three times, once for 15 weeks and the shortest time was 5 weeks.

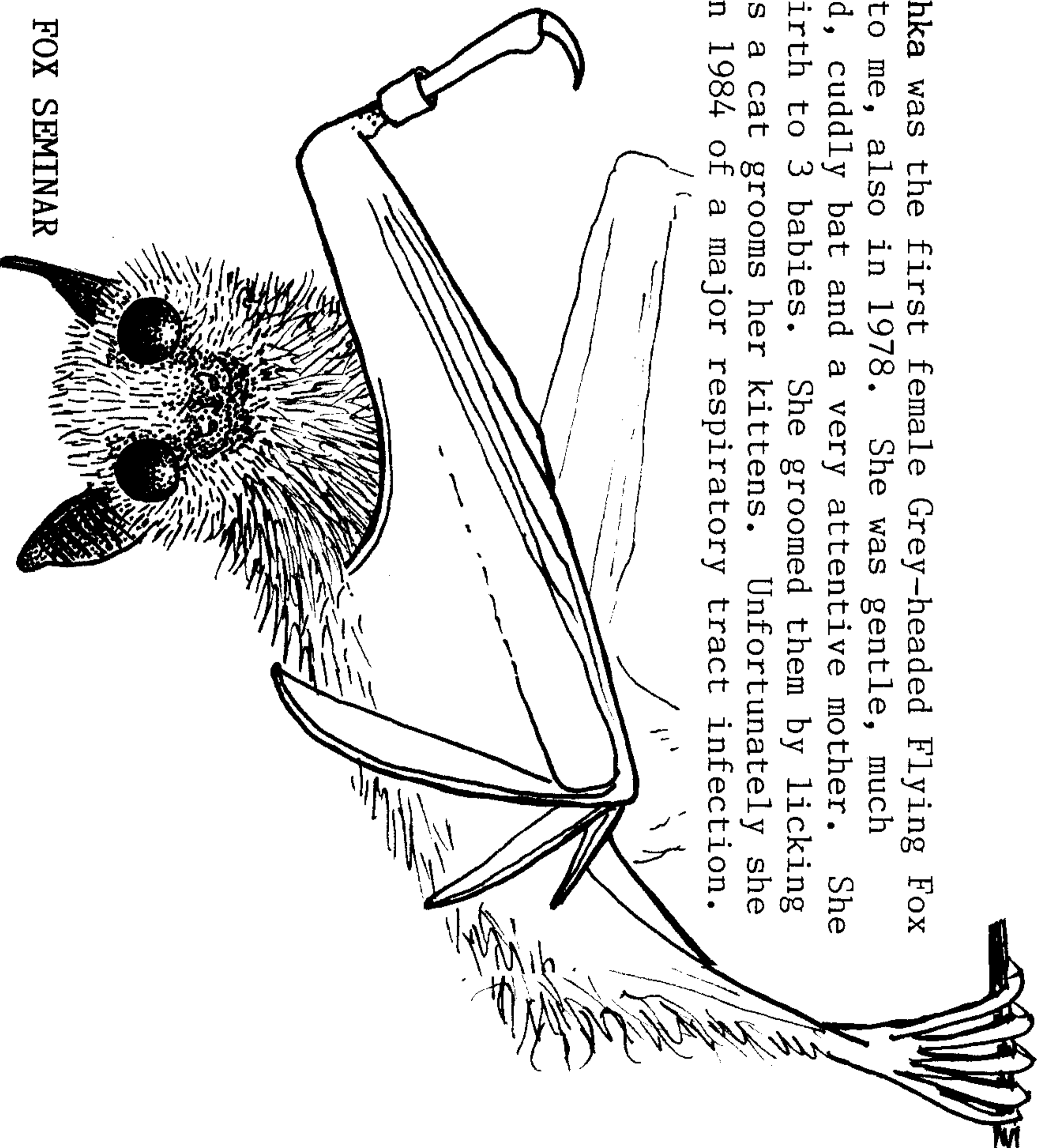
George was brought to me later in 1978 and became a companion for Peter. He had come down onto Tryon Road, Lindfield during a storm. He could not fly nor can he now because of the injuries sustained.

George is the dominant male of the group of bats which I care for. He is the father of a number of offspring and this year has sired 2 baby bats. George ensures that his females are undisturbed when in labour and somewhat in the manner of apes demands respect from the younger bats. He requires the highest roost in the cage.

He is a beautiful bat; he is silver with a pale fur compared to the more 'grizzled' colour of most Grey-headed flying foxes.



Petrushka was the first female Grey-headed Flying Fox given to me, also in 1978. She was gentle, much handled, cuddly bat and a very attentive mother. She gave birth to 3 babies. She groomed them by licking much as a cat grooms her kittens. Unfortunately she died in 1984 of a major respiratory tract infection.



#### FLYING FOX SEMINAR

In August the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee assisted me (Helen George) to attend the first Flying Fox Seminar held at the University of Queensland.

Bat scientists, fruit growers and conservationists attended. Recent biological studies were reported and the fruit growers were encouraged to describe their problems.

It was reported that netting has proved successful and cost/effective in the exclusion of bats from stone fruit orchards eg. peaches, plums and nectarines.

Bananas pose a problem in that netting is impossible on steep slopes. Growers in northern Queensland have fewer problems with flying foxes because adequate rainforests remain in the area to supply them with

food. Banana growers at Coffs Harbour contribute to a fund to employ shooters to destroy temporary camps of flying foxes in an effort to protect their crops.

Since flying foxes became protected fauna in N.S.W. this year a licence must be obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to shoot them. Licences have been issued to several fruit growers in the Hills District of Sydney. Some of the corpses have been collected and frozen for study by scientists.

Hopefully better methods will be devised to exclude bats from orchards, especially in poor blossom years.

#### **BAT FOSTERING A SUCCESS**

Thank you to all the people, from Mt. Ku-ring-gai to Sutherland who are fostering orphan Grey-headed Flying Foxes this spring. They are doing well on the new Wombaroo Bat Milk made by Brian Rich, a bio-chemist in South Australia. Helen George is now the N.S.W. distributor for Wombaroo products which include milk substitutes for wombats, the different species or kangaroos and wallabies, echidnas, possums etc. Helen is preparing flying fox hand rearing information which will be published shortly.

#### **1986 A BAD YEAR FOR BABY BATS**

An unusually large number of orphan Grey-headed Flying Foxes have been found this year. Most of them are very underweight when found and many adults which have been brought to Helen are up to 200 grams lighter than normal. It is believed to be a result of poor flowering of native trees during the winter and spring.

Fortunately the bats were able to make up on the large orange flowers of the Silky Oaks Grevillea robusta and now the Sydney Red Gum Angophora costata is flowering well.

## THANK YOU RESCUERS

Many baby bats which would normally have died have been found and rescued by persons who have come to care about bats.

Linesmen from the Sydney County Council have co-operated in removing live young from electrocuted females. The electricity must be switched off briefly and a cherry picker brought to the site. We thank them for their co-operation.

**WILDLIFE INFORMATION AND RESCUE SERVICE** has co-ordinated the rescue and transport of many of these baby bats. This volunteer organisation deserves congratulations and financial support for its efforts in caring for native animals. W.I.R.E.S. phones 9775380, 9774723.

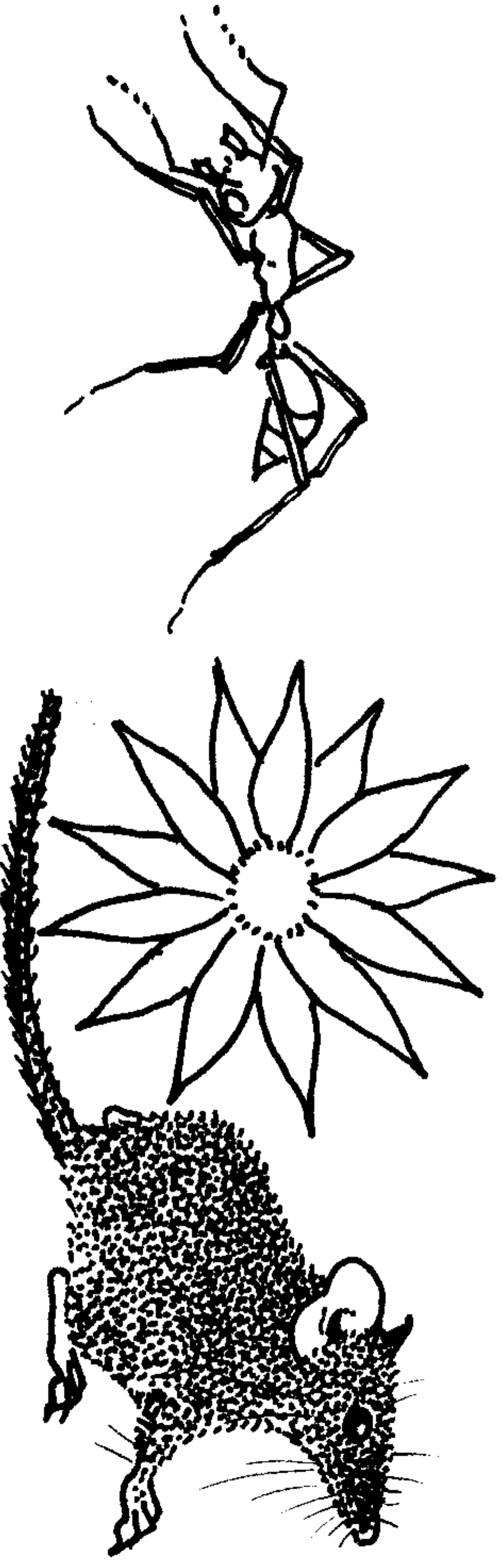
## ARE YOU A KNOWLEDGEABLE NATURE LOVER?

Try a course at Petersham or Sydney Colleges of Technical and Further Education, starting in February.

Learn native plant identification, about the habits of insects, birds and mammals (even bats).

Contact: Angela Murray 568 0276  
Neville Young 217 3952

during school holidays Sam 5690359 or Gemma 217 3581



## ACTIVITIES FOR BAT LOVERS

Visit the Bat Colony with 'Friends of the Bats' on  
March 21. R.S.V.P. by 14 March.  
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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

\* \* \*

Spread the news with car stickers - 50c.  
Forests Need Flying Foxes : Make Friends with a Bat

\* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

Letters or questions are welcomed by the Editor,  
Ross Pearson 24 Bayswater Road, Lindfield 2070.

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.  
Subscription renewal due on 30 June, 1987.