

# Friends of Bats



## newsletter

Issue 104, March 2012



We think this endearing mother/pup image (courtesy Vivien Jones) is a great masthead for our re-born website! Visit:

**[sydneybats.org.au](http://sydneybats.org.au)**

and use the contact page for feedback

## Netting backyard fruit trees

Cary Kuiper

Flying-foxes and other wildlife are still regularly being injured or killed from becoming entangled in the netting put over backyard fruit trees. They are tempted by the smell of the fruit, usually when their natural or nectar is not readily available. For flying-foxes that don't die from their injuries, or from dehydration or starvation after being tangled, the road to recovery is often long and painful.



Photo: Sarah Curran

You can see from the picture (above) how badly they can become trapped. The future for this flying-fox, (rescued early March) is still uncertain, as only time will tell if he can recover from the injuries caused from getting tangled in this net.

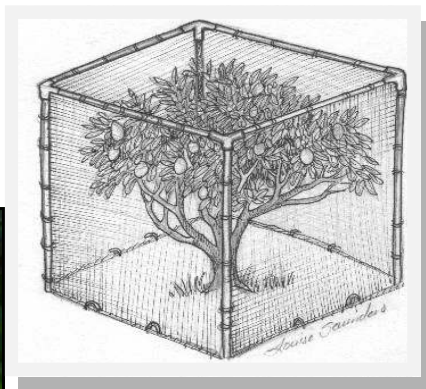
These tragedies can be largely avoided by ensuring that trees are protected correctly. Netting thrown loosely over a tree can easily trap animals and in their struggle to try and get free, they usually become more tangled and suffer worse injuries.

There are methods that can be used

For further information visit:

<http://www.sydneybats.org.au/flying-foxes/living-with-flying-foxes/safely-netting-fruit-trees-and-vegetable-gardens/>

to avoid such encounters, such as removing fruit before it ripens, placing paper bags over the fruit, or using shade cloth rather than netting. If however it's deemed necessary to use netting, ensuring that it's installed



Netting installed tightly over a frame will greatly reduce the chances of entanglement.

Illustration: Louise Saunders

tautly over a frame should reduce the chances of flying-foxes or other animals getting caught.

If you know of anyone who has fruit trees which are netted loosely, please let them know of the dangers to wildlife and encourage them to remove the netting or install it correctly.

If you find a flying-fox caught in netting, contact one of the wildlife rescue organisations immediately to report it and for instructions. Do not try to free it yourself as there's a risk you could be scratched or bitten.



## Easter Holiday Activity - Meet a Bat

Australian Walkabout Wildlife Park, Calga

**Sunday 15 April - 10.00 am - 2.00 pm**

(park opens 9.00 am closes 5.00 pm)

Meet a bat, really close!

Learn about bats

Kids activities

(more info: [walkaboutpark.com.au](http://walkaboutpark.com.au))

Bring your children/grand children!

**Special entry price:** \$12.00 per adult or child

(ie adults at child rates)

## New Bat Counters Needed!

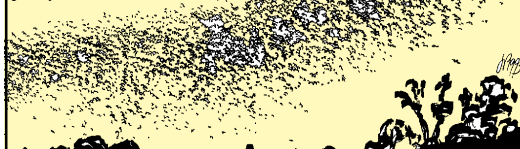
Counting flying-foxes as they fly out of Ku-ring-gai Flying-Fox Reserve is a very important task which yields important data about the behaviour of what is still a very under-researched and misunderstood species. Marjorie and Rolf Beck have been counting flying-foxes in Gordon for 18 years and would welcome the help of new counters.

Counts are conducted on a monthly basis (see page 3) and require approximately 30 minutes to count plus travelling time to and from Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve at Rosedale Rd Bridge, Gordon. Counters meet at about 10 minutes after sunset.

If you are interested in joining our team of counters to be involved in this important task, please contact Marjorie at

[web@sydneybats.org.au](mailto:web@sydneybats.org.au)

Jenny Porter



## Gold Coast Citizen of the Year, 2011

Ken Holland

Those concerned about the welfare of our Australian native fauna, and of our bats in particular, would have been delighted when it was announced that the individual nominated as Gold Coast Citizen for 2011 was none other than Trish Wimberly who, in partnership with husband Terry, works almost around the clock managing their joint enterprise, the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre (ABC).

Located in Advancetown in the Gold Coast hinterland, ABC is a major operation which provides treatment not just for sick, injured or orphaned bats, but for as many as 500 native animals, birds and reptiles at any one time. Since their first patient, Benjamin Bandicoot, was nursed back to health back in 2000, ABC has treated bats, possums, gliders, turtles, reptiles, and

so on. That is a major operation for a not-for-profit organization that costs around \$120,000 pa to run. It would be much more if it weren't for the work of the unpaid volunteers.

Advancetown is located 15 km west of Surfers Paradise (as the crow/bat flies). So, if you care for Australia's wildlife (and you wouldn't be reading if you weren't), and you find yourself up that way to soak up some sun, to celebrate the end of high school or whatever, a visit to ABC would be *de rigueur*. Oh, and don't forget your cheque book! ABC has Deductible Gift Recipient status, which means you can afford a bit more and claim it on your tax return.

For more information visit:

[australianbatclinic.com.au](http://australianbatclinic.com.au)



Trish Wimberly, founder of the Australian Bat Clinic and Gold Coast Citizen of the Year.

From

<http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/australian-bat-clinic>

## Flying-fox netting program for commercial producers - an update

Nancy Pallin

The NSW Government has allocated \$5 million dollars to partly fund full exclusion netting to protect commercial fruit crops from flying-foxes in the Sydney Basin and Central Coast. The Flying-fox Netting Program is administered by NSW Environmental Trust.

Unfortunately, by the time the Business Plan for the program was finalised and approved by the Trust it was too late in the year for fruit growers to install netting as they were fully occupied working long days in their orchards. Only a small number have applied for funding in the first year of the scheme which will only be available until June 2014. The slow uptake of funding may be due to low prices for fruit this summer and also flying-foxes being less of a problem, reducing the incentive to apply.

In recent years about 30 'licences to harm'\* flying-foxes have been

issued to fruit growers in NSW but this last summer only five were issued. No licences will be issued after June 2014 in the Sydney Basin and Central Coast, after the conclusion of the Flying-fox Netting Program, except in 'special circumstances'.

### Defining 'special circumstances'

*This term needs to be clearly defined. Humane Society International is pressing for clarification on behalf of the conservation and welfare organisations. Queensland and Victoria do not issue licences to fruit growers to kill flying-foxes. NSW must move to this position.*

\*Harm is the word used in the National Parks and Wildlife Act and is defined as "hunt, shoot, poison, net, snare, spear, pursue, capture, trap, injure or kill, but does not include harm by changing the habitat of an animal".

### Fruit Growers' perspective

I wrote to several fruit growers to find out how the installation of netting was going and whether there was much impact from the flying-foxes this fruit season.

Their answers -

*Ed Biel, grower of stone fruit in south-west Sydney:*

"My new netting installation is now complete. It was completed just in time for this season and I am thankful for it, as there were a couple of nights in December when I saw literally thousands of FF flying over my orchard - without it I would have suffered huge crop losses. However, I went to bed and had a good night's sleep and the shotgun stayed in the cupboard.

The season was impacted by the rain, some setting problems due

to a late frost and poor market prices. At least I was able to harvest what crop there was - and the bats were protected (at least at my place.)

This is the first season that I did not lose any sleep due to bats.

I know of one other grower who is scheduled to commence his structure in February, a couple have started in Bilpin but that's all I know of. I hope many take advantage of the grants this year."

*Peter Comensoli* who grows stone fruit north of Sydney.

'...and my answer, Nancy, is that I have again seen very few bats in the last season and prices have halved my returns. There's no way I can net this year and probably next either. I've gone from an advocate to an observer. I'm glad others can see their way clear to spend up but I can't right now.'

## Battle not over yet in Queensland

Judith Hopper, President, Wildlife Assistance & Information Foundation Inc, Queensland



Don't Shoot Bats Rally outside Queensland Parliament House, March 2012

Unfortunately the LNP of Queensland has stated during the election campaign that it will allow the re-introduction of shooting and electrocution of flying-foxes as methods of crop protection. Many will remember little Mango, a baby treated for horrible burns from electrocution. She survived but in the orchards most are left on the ground to die slowly or strung up on the wires suffering constant electric shocks. Electrocution is NOT a humane method for killing animals.

I have treated many shot flying-foxes -

mothers and babies - rescued and smuggled out by workers who couldn't bear to see them buried alive in mass graves.

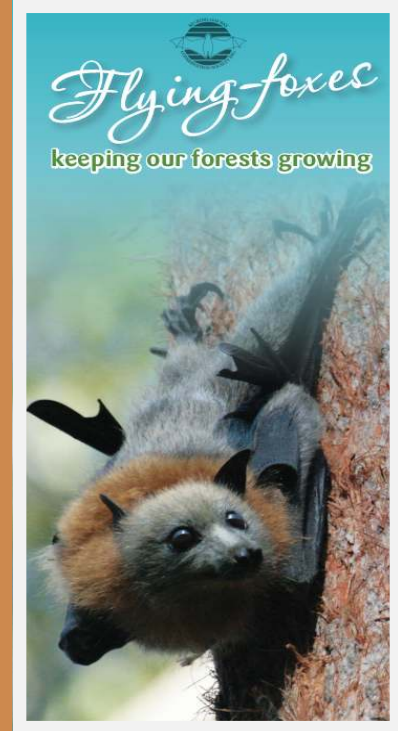
Please tell the Liberal National Party that you strongly oppose shooting and electrocution of flying-foxes as methods of crop protection. Electric grids are currently banned in Queensland but the LNP has said it will allow lethal methods again. Go to

[www.dontshootbats.com/take-action.html](http://www.dontshootbats.com/take-action.html).

The website has loads of information about flying-foxes and why the LNP's proposal is inhumane, environmentally damaging and ineffective.

We need to show the LNP that it is not just a few batty people who care, that this is a fundamental issue about wildlife cruelty and conservation.

It has implications for all wildlife, not just because flying-foxes are ecologically vital but because it threatens the requirement under Queensland laws for humaneness in crop protection and other actions involving protected wildlife.



This beautiful brochure which provides key information about flying-foxes was printed free of charge by **Enviro Print**.

If you would like a few copies to give to neighbours, friends or relatives please contact KBCS : [web@sydneybats.org.au](mailto:web@sydneybats.org.au)

## Monitoring flying-fox numbers in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve

Marjorie Beck

Counting flying-foxes as they roost in the trees is nigh on impossible in most flying-fox camps due to mid-storey plants blocking the view or the flying-foxes being easily disturbed so they take off and fly about.

'Counts' are therefore undertaken outside the reserve at points with good views across the stream of animals as they fly out to feed at dusk.

This first table below details the most recent counts in Ku-ring-gai. Compare these numbers with the two preceding seasons in the two tables below the first.

Want more information on flying-fox counts in Ku-ring-gai? Visit our new website: [sydneybats.org.au](http://sydneybats.org.au)

On the Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve page you'll find a graph with flying-fox count statistics since 1998.

### Welcome to our new counters - and even more needed!

KBCS is delighted to welcome two "new" volunteers to help with the flying-fox count as they leave the camp at dusk. Both are in their final year of Wildlife Management at Macquarie University and are interested in finding out more about these amazing animals. **Become a volunteer counter - See page !!**

Date	Estimated	Conducted by	Comments
17 November, 2011	10,070 (3 streams)	Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG)	
19 January, 2012	32,150 (3 streams)	KBCS volunteers & RBG	Small numbers of young noted flying out
16 February, 2012	24,755 (4 streams)	KBCS volunteers & RBG	Counted at Rosedale Rd, Maytone Ave, Warandoo St, & Darnley Oval - mostly flying north, many young seen flying with adults

Date	Estimate
11 November, 2010	9,780
31 December, 2010	18,470
31 January, 2011	24,550
17 February, 2011	20,000

### Where are they feeding now?

Have you observed flying-foxes feeding in your area? We are always interested in observations of flying-fox behaviour - email us with your information: [web@sydneybats.org.au](mailto:web@sydneybats.org.au)

Date	Estimate
12 November, 2009	26,090
23 December, 2009	29,540
12 January, 2010	33,765
17 February 2010	38,630

## Bats in the Domain

Margaret Ryan, Annandale

At dusk the flying-foxes streamed out across the sky. They were coming from the camp in Sydney's Botanic Gardens nearby, where their presence has caused one big headache for the authorities.

For the huge crowds assembled in the nearby Domain, waiting for *Symphony in the Park* to start after dark, the bats were a diversion.

This was a balmy January evening, people there just to experience the thrill of sitting out under the stars beguiled by lovely music. Even if you knew nothing about these small flying mammals, you could still sit back and enjoy the spectacle. And that's just what these concert-goers packing the grass were doing.

The sky turned a deep indigo. Against this backdrop the creatures resembled large shadowy birds as indeed they always do when in flight. And they kept on coming, never-ending, in their hundreds it seemed, as they soared and wheeled, climbing the sky to a strong, steady wing-beat. For one brief moment, I visualised Governor Phillip, when more than 200 years ago, he strolled across to nearby Farm Cove in the moonlight, to watch the Aboriginals perform corroborees.

These bats were preparing to take off on their nightly foraging all over Sydney for food, returning only at dawn. Nectar, fruit and pollen are what they like. Who hasn't heard their squabbling and squeals far into the night when they land on a tree or shrub which is fruiting to their taste? They are 'picky' too, eating the flesh

of fruits and spitting out the seeds. Indeed that is one way bats germinate the forests while travelling up and down the east coast of Australia.

Flying-foxes are much-maligned when all they are doing is living out their lives as nature intended. Unfortunately, the colony at the Gardens decided that the food provided in Sydney gardens and streets was so good. Why not stay and take up residence in the Botanical Gardens? Which is exactly what they have done – with damage to some trees?

The plan is to blast them out with 'industrial noises'. The hope is that they will join in with other camps at Cabramatta, Parramatta and Ku-ring-gai. But there is no guarantee. That is what worries animal-lovers and why they recently took the matter to court – but lost.

The concert finished with the *1812 Overture*. What are the Gardens worried about? The noise of cannon-fire actually blasting from a cannon on stage was enough to deafen a whole metropolis and drive the audience away – let alone the bats! Straight after, came the fireworks with a resounding boom, boom pumping an extravaganza into the sky that rained down in showers of silver and sparkle. Any animals living in the vicinity would have been terrified.

You never know, *Symphony in the Park* just might solve the problem of the grey-headed flying-foxes.

## Watching the flyout

Nancy Pallin

Our society has been continuing the tradition of watching the evening flyout by assisting Ku-ring-gai Council with its Walks and Talks Program. Rain has cancelled some events but the evening of 22nd February, 2012 was a success. 38 people attended and enjoyed the talk presented by KBCS member, Tim Pearson. The participants asked plenty of questions as they looked at the displays,

following the talk and while watching the bats fly over Rosedale Road bridge. They were a very interested group of people who came from many different parts of Sydney and backgrounds. And it didn't rain!

Council promotes these events and takes bookings. They are advertised in local newspapers and on Council's website.

Bring your friends, visitors and family along for one next summer. Email: [walksandtalks@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:walksandtalks@kmc.nsw.gov.au) or phone (02) 9424 0933

## Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Donations January to March 2012 totalled \$2241.00, received from:

B Crowther, S & J Hills, C Ip, G Lang, R MacGregor, D Morton, R Tanner, Westpac Gift Matching.

## Thank you all for your generosity!

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible -

receipts are mailed/emailed with the next newsletter unless otherwise requested.

## 2012 Release of orphans in KFFR & sad but interesting news of a released orphan

Tim Pearson

The release of orphan flying-foxes had to be done in two stages this year, because breeding was so widely spread.

A first lot of 18 orphans were successfully released. 10 more have since been released.

In the meantime, Gerry Hawkins, on the Shoalhaven, has recovered a banded bat – it's one that was rescued in Ku-ring-gai, hand-raised locally and released through the program at Gordon.

Six years isn't a long lifespan, but it does mean the animal survived the release program, reached maturity, and (hopefully) thrived until its untimely rendezvous with a power line... An 8 year life span for flying-foxes is about all we can expect nowadays...



Pup in release cage  
Ku-ring-gai Flying-Fox Reserve

## Friends of Bats

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**Bat Conservation Society Inc.**

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