

Friends of Bats

newsletter

Issue 107 December 2012



National flying-fox monitoring program takes off

The Commonwealth⁽¹⁾, CSIRO and environment agencies from QLD, NSW, ACT, VIC and SA have commenced a National Flying-fox Monitoring Program. It has been resourced through in-kind contributions from all partners, as well as funding from the Intergovernmental Hendra Virus Taskforce, and the National Environmental Research Program administered by DSEWPAC⁽¹⁾.

The program aims to improve the data

on the population size, distribution and spatial and temporal dynamics for the two EPBC-listed⁽²⁾ flying-foxes (the grey-headed flying-fox and spectacled flying-fox), as well as to collect data on the other flying-fox species occurring within the range of those two species. CSIRO is coordinating the count and has designed the methodology on which it is based.

It is planned to hold four counts each year and continue the program for as long as

resources are available and the data produced is useful. The counts will mainly involve officers from state environment agencies, as well as volunteers working with them. There will also be a remote-sensing component which will help to estimate the proportion of the national populations that are not being picked up through the ground counts. Given the dynamic nature of flying-foxes, we are expecting it will be some years before strong patterns or trends emerge from the data.

For more information visit: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/flying-foxes.html

⁽¹⁾ Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

⁽²⁾ listed as threatened under Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

KBCS comments on methodology

KBCS welcomes this study but considers it important that the agencies involved in the counts consult with camp managers before the counts commence, to gain maximum outcomes from this monitoring program.

For example, from its experience of flying-foxes in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve, Gordon, KBCS considers that it is not possible to get even a fair estimate of flying-foxes in the camp by counting from the ground. They roost in vegetation which has many layers so the counter's view is often obscured. The animals are easily disturbed, taking flight, circling and moving from one tree to another, making it almost impossible to assess numbers accurately.

Learn a new skill - counting bats!

KBCS conducts counts of the flying-foxes every month as they leave the valley at night to forage. If anyone would like to help with these counts they would be most welcome. Counts take about an hour and fly-out commences at approx 20 minutes after sunset. If interested please email: web@sydneybats.org.au

'Meet a bat day' at Parramatta Park

Story & photos: Leonie Bayley

KBCS held a very successful bat event at Parramatta Park on 2nd December, next to the grey-headed flying-fox camp. Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park rangers Tim and Cary brought bats from the park. Representing the bats were Luke, Ariel and Lily while Cary, Tim, Nancy, Jocelyn, Kath, Nick, Kerrie & Leonie represented KBCS.

Visitors, as usual, were enthralled to see flying-foxes as they had never seen one so close. They were much enlightened and

comments included 'I didn't know that', 'aren't they cute & adorable', 'never realised how beautiful they were', 'they aren't aggressive at all', 'they aren't bad as portrayed in the media'.

What a *huge plus* the scopes were in assisting with the promotion and education of these beautiful creatures! There were so many who were interested, keeping Nick, Kerrie & Kath very busy with much adjusting of the height of the scopes (kindly loaned by Tina & Tim)!



Above: Young Charlie tests the focus
Inset: View through the scope.

Below: Scopes to the left, bats right



Flying-foxes dine out in Sydney - what's on their menu?

Story & photos: Nancy Pallin

Turpentines (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) flowered moderately well during late September and October and flying-foxes fed quietly as far as I could tell.

At the beginning of November, flying-foxes shifted their nightly attention to silky oaks (*Grevillea robusta*). It was easy to know which silky oak was producing the most nectar. I could hear the bats chattering and trilling as they filled their bellies with nectar, flying between trees to gain the advantage.

Silky oaks are the biggest of the 250 grevillea species, which range in size from these tall trees to ground-hugging plants. Its natural distribution is on the upper reaches of coastal rivers in northern NSW and south-east Queensland and the Bunya Mountains. Today many are planted in cities and towns providing a profusion of nectar for birds and bats for a few weeks.

By mid-November, white flowers of the Sydney red gums (*Angophora costata*) turned the forest canopy of bushland into a patchwork of green and white. Noela Jones heard flying-foxes feeding in her neighbour's angophora. This species does not flower well enough, or produce sufficient nectar every year, to attract flying-foxes. Like 2006, this year was a

good one and the flying-foxes made the most of it. After the 2006 flowering, seedlings of this angophora germinated in huge numbers suggesting that their flowers were pollinated. Did the flying-foxes contribute by carrying pollen between trees? Well, they were certainly dashing between trees in my neighbourhood.

Next to flower has been blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), one of the tallest trees. Although the flowers don't show above the canopy – they occur on stalks below the end bunch of leaves – flying-foxes find them without any trouble. Before dawn I watched as flying-foxes left individually from various trees along a bushland valley to fly the few kilometres to their camp in Gordon. Afterwards I checked and sure enough each tree they had been in was a blackbutt and it was in flower.

It intrigues me that this species occurs from southern NSW to south-east Qld including Fraser Island, from the sea to the dividing range. This distribution suggests to me that gene-flow north and south is being maintained by pollinators like flying-foxes, swift parrots, wattle birds and other nectar feeders which are able

to carry pollen between patches of forest containing blackbutts. Certainly the blackbutts in the valley near my place were producing their nectar at night.



Above: Sydney Red Gum in flower.

Below: Blackbutt flowers



Hannah - "bat matriarch" celebrates her 24th birthday in style!

Story & photos: Leonie Bayley

A quick drive north of Sydney, along the F3, is Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park (AWWP), Calga. Set amongst typical Australian bush, with scribbly gums, banksia, kangaroos, wallabies and emus, is the recently-constructed flying-fox enclosure. Some of the resident bats were transferred here from Kukundi in Lane Cove National Park; others were rescued for one reason or another and cannot be released back into the wild.

On 21 October 2012, there was excitement in the air as it was time to celebrate Hannah's 24th birthday! She is believed to be the oldest known bat in captivity or in fact, in the wild, but that would be hard to prove. Bat's years are taken from the usual 'birthing season' which is October/November.

Hannah partied with friends from KBCS. AWWP staff were in attendance, particularly Tim and Cary, who both spend time travelling with these bats for educational purposes and are frequently at the park, outside the enclosure, educating visitors about the importance of bats to the environment. They spend many hours interacting with the resident bats.



Hannah - birthday girl with the sweetest of features & the sweetest of natures!



Tim & Jackson perform for a captivated audience!

Net your fruit trees safely this summer & be kind to wildlife



Netting pulled tightly over a backyard fruit tree, above, will lessen the chances of wildlife - bats, birds, reptiles - becoming entangled (right). Animals suffer appalling injuries as they try to disentangle themselves. See below - entanglement season has started.

One welcome piece of news on the netting front - reported by Lawrence Pope of Victorian Advocates for Animals (VAFA) in October: The Reject Shop, which has 239 stores nationwide, has agreed to no longer stock monofilament netting. Once current stock is sold it will sell only Hailguard type netting. The Reject Shop is not a franchise so this decision, made in Melbourne, will apply to all its stores around Australia. The Reject Shop is to be thanked for understanding the problems monofilament netting causes for wildlife and wildlife rescuers.



Photo: Mike Jupp

Microbats of Sydney - poster out now

Research scientists Dr Brad Law and Dr Caragh Threlfall have created the first poster to feature Sydney's microbats - 17 of approximately 20 species to be found in Sydney.

KBCS, together with Ku-ring-gai, Warringah, Parramatta City and The Hills Shire Councils, funded the poster.

KBCS chair, Nancy Pallin, organised printing and is co-ordinating distribution to councils, environment centres, catchment authorities and National Parks offices.

Microbats are not generally well-known creatures, so it is hoped that this poster will raise awareness of this diverse part of our fauna.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy or copies of the poster please contact: web@sydneybats.org.au

Below: a preview of the poster



Flying-foxes - an update on care

Tim Pearson

The number of orphans coming in to care in October and November has been large, with up to 20 calls a day being received, most resulting from electrocutions. This means the numbers of pups in care is high with some carers having up to six or seven pups each.

These November 2012 numbers are four to five times higher than in any other November since records have been kept. This does not appear to be due to starvation - the Central Coast, Sydney and Illawarra bats are healthy; however, from Wingham Brush north to Brisbane starvation does appear to be occurring.

Net-caught bats (ie. bats which have become entangled in loose netting thrown over backyard fruit trees) are starting to be brought in now, which is early.

The total population of bats in the Sydney Basin does not seem unnaturally high, however Centennial Park and Wolli Creek have high numbers of bats due to the dispersal at RBG (continuing noise disturbance).

The conclusion is that flying-foxes are in trouble up and down the coast and a variety of reasons are responsible. In Sydney they are very stressed, resulting in many coming into care.

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

Shooting of flying-foxes in NSW MUST stop - add your voice and help make it happen

Email Barry O'Farrell: office@premier.nsw.gov.au
or write to: Barry O'Farrell, Premier of NSW,
Parliament House,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

- Express your dismay that orchardists can still obtain licences to shoot flying-foxes which is cruel, unethical and ineffective.
- Congratulate the government on the provision of \$5m funding to erect exclusion netting which **IS** effective.
- Ask when shooting of flying-foxes will be made illegal

KBCS supports new bat book

Ken Holland

Vivien Jones is in the process of producing a new book featuring her fantastic photos of flying-foxes.

Vivien has supported Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society over the years by allowing us to use her wonderful flying-fox images on our website, in our newsletters and other educational material.

KBCS committee recently voted to show appreciation of that support by contributing \$1000 towards publication of her book '*Night Foresters; the life of Australian Grey-headed Flying-foxes*'.

The book will have excellent educational merit and will help to bring information about flying-foxes to a wide audience.

We trust others will be similarly inspired to support this project.

Three cheers for wildlife carers and banders

Sarah was called to rescue a grey-headed flying-fox on the ground in a pre-school playground in Castle Hill. Heavily pregnant, the flying-fox was using her upper body with a lot of strength but was unable to use her lower limbs.

Sarah took her to a vet who X-rayed her and found that her spine was fractured. This explained her paralysis but meant that she would have to be euthanased. The x-ray confirmed she was carrying a very 'close-to-term' pup. The vet performed a caesarean and out came the little man, ears pricked up, eyes wide open.

The mother flying-fox was banded so the number was relayed to the bander. They reported that the female flying-fox had been rehabilitated and released in the Newcastle area on 20/02/2008. She was an adult at the time of release, so was probably about six years old at the time of the collision that led to her death.

Bat Conservation Gift Fund news

Thank you to all our generous donors, whether anonymous or named below. Donations received from October to December, 2012:

J Adams, S & J Hills, K Holland, C Kuiper, G Lang, D Ondinea, V & P Palangas, S Payne, E Sehmer, C Simpson, A Sutherland, M Woof.

Donations so far this year total \$5945.

Membership renewal

It's not too late to renew your membership for this year (valid to 30 June 2013). Remember that donations are always welcome (donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible).

- If you receive this newsletter by mail, please check the envelope to see if your membership is due.
- If you receive the newsletter by email and your membership has not been renewed, this will be mentioned in the email.
- If you have a query, email: web@sydneybats.org.au

Below:

One of Vivien's iconic images which we are proud to display on every page of our website



Friends of Bats

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