

Friends of Bats

newsletter

Issue 110 September 2013



Vivien's take on flying-fox photography

Janet Pollock

After a great meal and a chance to catch up, those present at Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society's AGM were treated to a lesson in wildlife photography by Bellingen photographer Vivien Jones.

Vivien's much admired photographs are the result of experience, careful planning, knowledge of her quarry's habits plus patience and perseverance. The fact that flying-foxes are in trees makes it difficult for ground-dwelling photographers to find a good angle at the right height. Vivien talked about the importance of getting composition right and passed on a number of hints.

Vivien also mentioned the benefits of using a flash if the faces are in shadow, which also brings out the colour and texture of the fur. She normally uses a very long lens with an image stabilizer but does not use a tripod which she feels would hinder her need to move about quickly, which is necessary to cover rapidly changing situations. And she doesn't carry anything big which might spook the flying-foxes.

We saw a lovely collage of 'mug shots' to demonstrate which faces were suitably lit, focused or had features that would make a suitable subject. Vivien likes to make the most of the expressive faces of flying-foxes by photographing them looking right into the lens. She also pointed out the importance of making a photograph understandable to the viewer, which is not always easy when there is a tangle of fur and wings. Then there is the issue of which way round do you print a bat face when they are hanging upside down!

The highlight was the truly gorgeous photographs. There was one of a flying-fox between two branches looking very philosophical and a group of three photographs, clearly showing that flying-foxes don't drink while skimming water but lick the water off their wet fur.

Vivien's photos are very memorable so it's good to know that a book of her photographs has just been published. A great Christmas present for lovers of flying-foxes or wildlife photography.



The cover of Vivien's book



The birthing season is almost upon us with female flying-foxes producing just one pup from September onwards.

Photo: Vivien Jones

Bat Night at Gordon - Rosedale Rd bridge

Friday 15th November

Members are invited to assist/attend

For more information visit www.sydneymbats.org.au

To purchase Vivien's book

'Flying-foxes, Australian Night Foresters'

follow this link: **FLYING-FOXES Australian Night Foresters**

or visit <http://www.rosenbergpub.com.au>

Price: \$39.95 (AUD), available now

Management Plan for Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve

Nancy Pallin

Ku-ring-gai Councillors approved the Management Plan for Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve on 13 August 2013, following time on public exhibition.

• Canopy replacement plan

The plan enables development and implementation of a 10 year roosting habitat/tree canopy replacement plan that identifies replacement areas and suitable methods and species. It commits Council to substantially increase inputs into the habitat restoration project. KBCS will have input into these plans and the Bushcare Group will be actively involved in assisting with it.

• Release cage to be moved

Strong pressure on Councillors from residents affected by the nocturnal noise of the flying-foxes, especially during the mating season, has resulted in commitment by Council to end use of the release cage after 26 years. Council has committed to assist in

finding an alternative site and building a new release cage (used in February and March for release of rehabilitated juvenile flying-foxes).

• Strategic removal of trees for Taylor and Waugoola Streets

At the council meeting one Councillor proposed that there should be a 100 metre buffer zone with no trees at all (as reported by a KBCS member present at the meeting). The reserve measures only 249m wide at its widest point and mostly is about 150m wide, such a proposal (see map below) would destroy the entire bushland, not only for flying-foxes but for other fauna and flora and perhaps other human neighbours would not be so impressed. Council has committed to the strategic removal of trees on the boundary of the reserve close to Taylor and Waugoola Streets to alleviate the concerns of residents.



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

Be safe and live with bats

The family of a former Sunshine Coast boy who succumbed to a potentially deadly lyssavirus launched a public awareness campaign to help other parents ensure the safety of their children around bats.

Michelle Flynn and Colin Boucher are hoping their program will target children to ensure they are aware of the dangers of contact with bats. For more information visit the Sunshine Coast Daily at:

<http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/bid-to-save-young-lives/1979931/>

Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve - Update and Bushcare overview

Nancy Pallin

Counts of all flying-fox camps in the Sydney region are being undertaken by the Botanic Gardens Trust and the following are the numbers counted in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve in recent months:

- June 16,870
- July 8,947
- August 4,210
- September 16,644

The maps below show the current locations of the camps. The reason why flying-foxes have moved into the gully close to Taylor Street is that the trees are very tall and get plenty of sun. The most likely reason the camp is split into two areas is because of deterioration of trees in between.

This was primarily caused by a severe infestation of madeira vine (*Anredera cordifolia*), a Weed of National Significance, around the junction of major sewers. From its distribution, this weed was probably brought into the valley as tubers in soil when the sewers were laid in 1927.

After much experimentation, Council has finally found a suitable herbicide mix effective in killing this virulent weed and is making good progress towards eradicating it in the reserve. As soon as the tubers in the soil are exhausted, tree planting will commence.



Above: Flying-fox camp June - July 2013 shown with blue outline.

Below: August 2013. Note that area occupied is smaller.



The Tuesday Bushcare team, Bruce, Jill, Jenny, Ken, Helen, Marjorie and Nancy, put in 525 hours on site from July 2012 to end of June 2013. Sadly some of our long term volunteers have had to face reality and retire from an activity they have enjoyed for several decades. Big thanks to Marjorie and Jenny.

In Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve, a very important objective is to protect existing native trees in the reserve so that flying-foxes, owls and other fauna have a place to roost. The native silkpod vine (*Parsonsia straminea*) is vigorous and its wind-blown seeds spread easily. It strangles trees and can cause them to fall. Therefore we cull this vine while leaving less vigorous species to provide habitat.



Ken cuts the vine and applies herbicide immediately, to protect a large turpentine tree.

Another objective is to maintain habitat complexity from ground covers up to the tree tops. Much of the native vegetation is being 'mown' by swamp wallabies except where it is protected by guards such as mesh around young trees. We are keen to exclude wallabies from larger areas to support other wildlife as well as to regenerate roosting trees for flying-foxes and other fauna.

Over the last two years, KBCS Bushcarers experimented with light-weight fencing to create habitat patches. Our latest fencing style is now effective in excluding wallabies. Seed either stored in the soil or delivered by birds or bats is now beginning to germinate and colonise the 'wallaby exclosures'. So far, from seed in the soil: 3 native grass species, herbs and twiners *Veronica plebeia*, *Schellhammra undulata*, *Glycine sp.*, *Sennecio minimus* and shrubs *Dodonaea triquetra*, *Ozothamnus diosmifolius*, *Pultenaea flexilis*. From seed spread by fauna: trees such as blueberry ash, sweet pittosporum, shrubs *Breynia oblongifolia* and creepers *Hibbertia dentata*, *Solanum prinophyllum*.

In addition to the natural regeneration we have planted 15 turpentines and 15 *Callicoma serratifolia* which are growing well, safe within their fences.

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Above: Nancy plants a *Callicoma* inside an enclosure while Bruce secures shade cloth to the lower section of the fence to prevent water dragons from getting caught in the plastic mesh (photo Jill Green)



Ginger lily is a common weed and some animal has been chewing its rhizomes. We suspect that this happens at night so we hope to place an infrared movement camera to learn more about the nocturnal activities of wildlife in the reserve.

Another Bushcare group has formed on the southern side of the reserve where rock shelves divide property boundaries from trees occupied by flying-foxes. Fortunately houses there are set close to the road and their long back gardens mean the flying-foxes are much further away than on the northern side of the valley.

Birds are in full voice at present so the bushcarers are enjoying the calls of golden whistlers, yellow robins, grey fantails, spotted pardalotes, fantail cuckoos, a grey-shrike thrush, white-throated treecreeper, yellow-tail black cockatoo as well as the scrub wrens, thornbills and gerygones.

KBCS AGM 2013

28 people attended the AGM with seven apologies.

Committee for the coming year is:

Chair: Nancy Pallin

Deputy Chair: Tim Pearson

Secretary: Leonie Bayley

Treasurer: Jocelyn Chenu

Other Members: Lyn Burns, Jen O'Meara, Cary Kuiper, Mina Bassarova, Katherine Russell and Tina Hsu.

If you were unable to attend and would like to receive the annual report which includes the audited financial statement, contact us at: web@sydneybats.org.au

Bat Conservation Gift Fund News

Thank you to all donors for your generosity, whether anonymous or named below. Donations received July - September 2013 from:

R & J Abell, J Burke, G Cohen, K Cox-Witton, L Desmond, B Dowsett, H Dunne, M Eade, P Eby, N Edards, J Green, S & J Hills, K Holland, J Hutchinson, E Jones, N Jones, V Jones, N Kent, C Kuiper, G Lang, P Langley, H Logie, R MacGregor, J Madden, N Myers, B Nilsson, C Nolder, R Noone, E Oakley, Oatley Iora and Fauna Conservation Society Inc., S O'Grady, J O'Meara, D Ondinea, K Parkhouse, J Pollock, L Pope, K Russell, J Snell, J Stockard, R Tanner, B Taylor, L Toby, J Walker, M Warner, A Whitney, A & V Wiggers de Vries, M Wood, M Worley. Donations so far this year total \$2282.00

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Hannah - too young for Guinness World Records!

Leonie Bayley contacted Guinness World Records to see if Hannah (ex-education bat residing at Australian Walkabout Wildlife Park) could possibly be the world's oldest known flying-fox as she is approaching her 25th birthday.

Leonie applied for the category of 'oldest living in captivity grey-headed flying-fox'. Unfortunately, after thoroughly reviewing the application with members of their research team, the Guinness World Records were unable to accept the proposal.

Their category appears to be limited to 'bat' and the world record holder for a captive flying-fox is:

'The world's oldest bat was an Indian fruit bat (Pteropus giganteus), which died at London Zoo on 11 January 1979, aged 31 years and 5 months'.

And for microbats:

'In the wild, a little brown mouse-eared bat (Myotis lucifugus) found dead in a cave on Mt Aeolus in Vermont, USA, on 30 April 1960 is known to have been at least 24 years old, because it had been banded back on 22 June 1937 when it was already fully mature.'

Friends of Bats

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Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc.

PO Box 607, Gordon, NSW, 2072 Australia.

Website: www.sydneybats.org.au

Email: web@sydneybats.org.au

Chair: Nancy Pallin (02) 9416 7334

Membership enquiries: Penny Diakiw (02) 9449-3539

Newsletter editor: Jen O'Meara