

Protect our Grey-headed Flying-foxes



We need Flying-foxes and they need us

Flying-foxes are essential to the ecology of the Shoalhaven. Inhabitants of the earth for over 35 million years, they solely propagate over 100 species of native trees, and without them, these habitats will perish, removing the habitat of our native birds and the forest which we all enjoy.

The flow on effect from the loss of this species influences the reproductive and evolutionary processes of many forest types, including hardwoods. Hardwood timber for example is an important resource for many as it is used for flooring, decks, pergolas, power poles, wharves, bridges, sleepers, fencing and pallets.

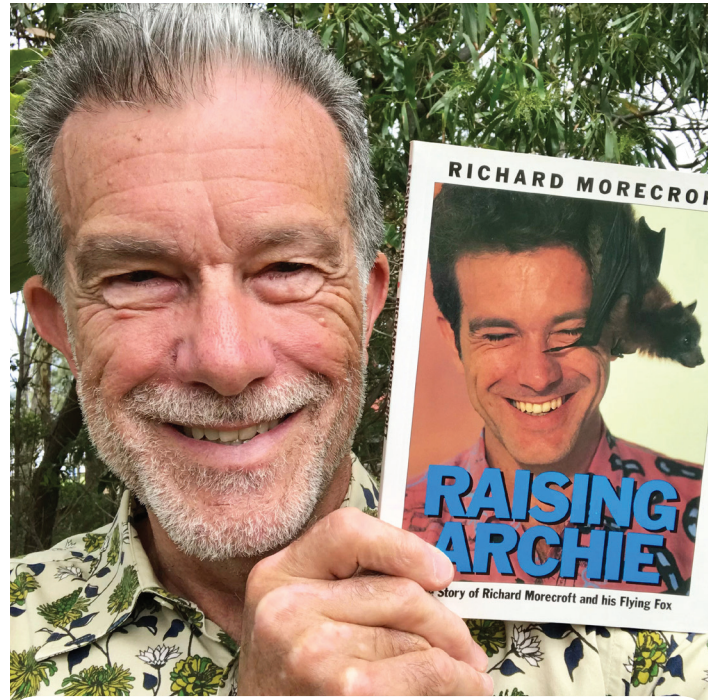


Current threats

The Grey-headed Flying-fox is listed as vulnerable to extinction under both the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act) and Commonwealth Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

Grey-headed Flying-fox numbers continue to decline, with numbers dropping from many millions to less than 680,000 nationally in 2015. The loss of habitat and climatic changes including drought and bushfire have meant that Flying-foxes have had to face either starvation due to drought (babies often die because their mothers do not lactate when food is scarce), or move closer to towns to search for food and shelter. 2020 saw the death of 72,000 flying foxes during one heatwave alone.

Disturbance at roosting sites, shooting, electrocution by powerlines, wildlife-unfriendly netting, barbed wire fencing, forest clearing, poor public perception and ill-treatment are all very real threats to the survival of this species.



"Flying-foxes are sometimes feared and often misunderstood, but they play a really important part in the health of our natural environment. Their natural foods are the nectars and fruits of Australian native trees and by eating them and travelling widely from one place to another, flying foxes are important pollinators and seed distributors - vital to keeping our native forests growing.

Because we've cut down so many of the trees where they would normally feed, they sometimes have to find food with what we've planted instead – and that can mean from fruit trees and orchards.

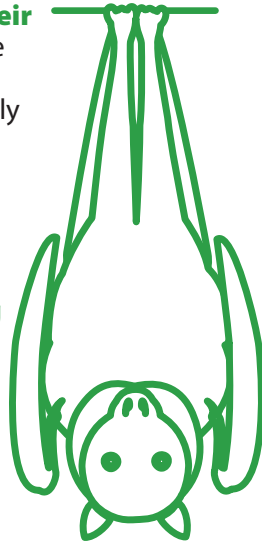
Flying-foxes are intelligent and have close-knit, well-organised social groups. They have a large and complex vocabulary with which they communicate.

They are not aggressive towards humans – and they don't carry COVID. If left alone in their natural state, they are not a danger to anyone. And because so many have died or been killed off, they are now listed as vulnerable to extinction and need our protection." – **Richard Morecroft**

What can you do?

There are a few things you can do to help ensure the future of this important species:

1. Flying-foxes **need to conserve their energy** during the day to have the energy to fly and forage. **Do not disturb** roosting animals, especially during extremely hot days.
2. Connect with your local wildlife group to offer your support - **Wildlife Rescue South Coast**.
3. Help **protect remaining roosting habitat** and food resources.
4. **Plant trees** that provide them with a food resource.
Find out more: bit.ly/2Zmv8ic
5. Install **wildlife friendly fencing**.
Find out more: bit.ly/3a1VAig
6. **Use wildlife-friendly netting** in your garden and encourage others to do the same. Find out more: bit.ly/3k47sZP



Commonly questions answered

Q. What is the risk of disease?

Human infections with viruses borne by flying-foxes are extremely rare. In Australia, there have been three confirmed cases of Australian Bat Lyssavirus in humans. All were in Queensland. There have been seven confirmed cases of Hendra virus in humans, also all in Queensland.

NSW Department of Health advise that there are no reports of disease being spread by contact or exposure to flying-fox faeces, urine or blood. It has been confirmed that human cases of Hendra virus were followed by high level exposures to body fluids of an infected horse.

Q. Can I catch Coronavirus if I come into contact with a bat?

There is no evidence to suggest that any animals in Australia might be a source of COVID-19 and there is no evidence of SARS-CoV-2 or SARS-CoV-2-like viruses in Australian wildlife – please visit the Wildlife Health Australia website for more information: wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

Q. Can I touch a bat?

Members of the community should not handle flying-foxes unless they have been trained, vaccinated against Australian Bat Lyssavirus and use the proper protective equipment.

Do not handle any sick or distressed bats, call Wildlife Rescue South Coast on 0418 427 214 to assist you.

Q. Can't we just disperse them somewhere else?

Attempts to 'evict' or 'disperse' camps have been almost always unsuccessful. In all cases they do not abandon the local area (usually less than 600m). Camps can often split into two or more - increasing the number of people impacted, repeat dispersal actions are required and the financial costs are high. Methods used can also cause significant disruption to neighbours.

It is illegal for residents to try and disperse bats through noise creation such as banging of pots or smoking them out. This could not only potentially harm a threatened species but also disturb neighbours, resulting in a complaint being lodged with Council and the police. Residents can also lodge a complaint through Enviroline by calling 131 555.

Q. Are the bats likely to go away on their own if they are in my backyard or close by?


Typically flying-foxes will move on when the food runs out, however when conditions are difficult (e.g. drought) they may stay for longer as there is very little food anywhere and they will try to save their energy.

Want more information?

The Little Aussie Battlers website provides a great source of information about this endangered species – go to: littleaussiebat.com.au



Contact Us

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 Search 'Flying-foxes' on our website