

## Natural Behaviour

### CAMPS:

Flying foxes live in communal groups. They have a preference for tall and reasonably dense vegetation close to creeks or rivers or over swampy areas. Some camps are permanent and are occupied all year round. During summer these camps are usually the largest and noisiest as they are breeding camps. For the rest of the year camps are smaller and quieter and often transitory in response to food sources. Permanent camps need an area large enough to allow bats to move within the camp so that damaged vegetation can recover.

### Diet

The diet of the Grey Headed Flying Fox consists of fruit, pollen, nectar, stamen and flower parts, leaves and bark.

Flying Foxes have a preference for blossoms that consist of light coloured flowers arranged in bunches located on the periphery of the tree canopy. The flowers of most eucalypts, lilly pilli and melaleuca exhibit these characteristics. They also produce the most nectar and pollen at night. As they gather nectar, they also have deposits of pollen on their chests which they transfer to other trees. Flying foxes are the major pollinators of eucalyptus and rainforests. Preferred fruit is also in bunches, at the end

of branches. A sweet musky odour is highly attractive, but colour is not important for the Grey Headed or Black Flying Fox. Urban bats also eat domestic fruit such as mulberries and mango.



### How can I stop them eating the fruit off our fruit trees?

Many people have learned to compromise with both birds and flying foxes. You can place paper bags over the low hanging fruit that you wish to keep for yourself; this will ensure that the flying foxes, birds and insects cannot gain access to this fruit. You can then leave the remainder of the fruit higher in the tree for the flying foxes and birds.

For more information or help  
with a native animal call  
1800 008 290



## FLYING FOXES & THE ENVIRONMENT

N. T. W. C.



### WHY ARE FLYING-FOXES IMPORTANT?

Flying-foxes help pollinate plants and spread seeds, ensuring the survival of our native forests. They do this over much larger distances than birds or insects.

## Vulnerable

The grey-headed flying-fox is a native species and is thus protected. It is also listed as Vulnerable to extinction under NSW and national threatened species legislation.

A species does not need to be rare to be under threat! The grey-headed flying-fox was listed as Vulnerable because of declining numbers and the key threat of habitat loss.

Records indicate that grey-headed flying-foxes may once have numbered in the millions but have now reduced to as few as 400,000 – scientists estimated that the species had declined by 30% in the decade prior to listing. The low birth rate of flying-foxes means that numbers cannot rebound as quickly as many other species.

## What's impacting on flying-fox habitat?

Loss of habitat is the main threat to flying-foxes and is a key cause of their conflict with humans. Developments along the coast are increasingly competing with existing flying-fox habitat and bringing them into closer contact with humans. Flying-foxes may be more visible simply because their key remaining habitat is near our homes and farms.

Habitat loss has meant flying-foxes are more affected by weather events and years of native food scarcity. Urban gardens and rural

orchards are now providing flying-foxes with food when natural sources are scarce. Other human-related impacts on flying-foxes include injuries from getting caught in barbed wire fences, electrocuted on power lines, and legal and illegal shooting.

## What do I do if I find an injured flying-fox?

If you find a flying-fox alone or on the ground it is probably injured and you should report it to a wildlife rescue organisation like Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers. You should not approach or handle a flying-fox.

Although the chance of catching Lyssavirus from a flying fox is extremely low please don't handle flying foxes. If you get bitten or scratched then the law requires that the bat is euthanased and tested. Shield the animal from domestic animals. Always keep a safe distance away and ring Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers on 1800 008 290.

## Grey Headed Flying Foxes

***Grey headed flying foxes are becoming rare. They are federally listed as vulnerable to extinction. It's hard to believe when you see a colony of thousands but when they are in your area they have left another empty.***

## Polinators

Flying foxes are our main pollinators of native forests and are a keystone species and extremely important for biodiversity of our forests as their main diet consists of pollen. They will eat fruit if their preferred diet is unavailable due to increased clearing of land or weather events.

Flying foxes have only 1 young per year carrying the young, attached to their nipple by mouth and hanging onto the mum with their feet, for 6 weeks after birth. Until the young are 6 weeks old they can't keep themselves warm. The young are then left together in a crèche until they begin to fly at around 12 weeks of age. They continue suckling till approximately 7 months old.

## Lyssavirus & Hendra Virus

A small number of flying foxes, less than 1%, carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL). This disease can be transmitted to humans if bitten or scratched by an infected bat. Three people died in Queensland during the 1990s before the disease was recognised and a vaccine was available.

Some bats may also carry the Hendra Virus which is not transmitted to humans but may be transmitted to horses and horses can transmit Hendra to humans. A vaccine for horses that prevents this is highly recommended if the horses are close to a colony or flowering trees.