

Flying foxes in the ACT



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Update to National Flying Fox Forum
September 2023



ACT Wildlife
Rescue • Rehabilitate • Release

Background

- ▶ The Australian Capital Territory flying fox camp is seasonal
- ▶ GHFFs generally arrive in September/October, leave in May/June
 - ▶ A small (brave) group overwintered in 2014
- ▶ The camp is in an area controlled by the National Capital Authority (a Commonwealth government agency)
 - ▶ but the bats forage widely over the ACT (Territory government)
- ▶ The purpose of ACT Wildlife is to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured, sick and orphaned native wildlife
 - ▶ We have rescued GHFFs in both Commonwealth and Territory areas

Grey-headed Flying-foxes and Little reds in ACT region



- ▶ GHFF Camp in Commonwealth Park
 - ▶ Occasional visits recorded 1960-2000
 - ▶ Seasonal maternity camp from 2003
 - ▶ Highest peak population 9000 in 2020
- ▶ *Scapulatus* camp of around 300 at Lake Ginninderra in 2021



Seasonal pattern

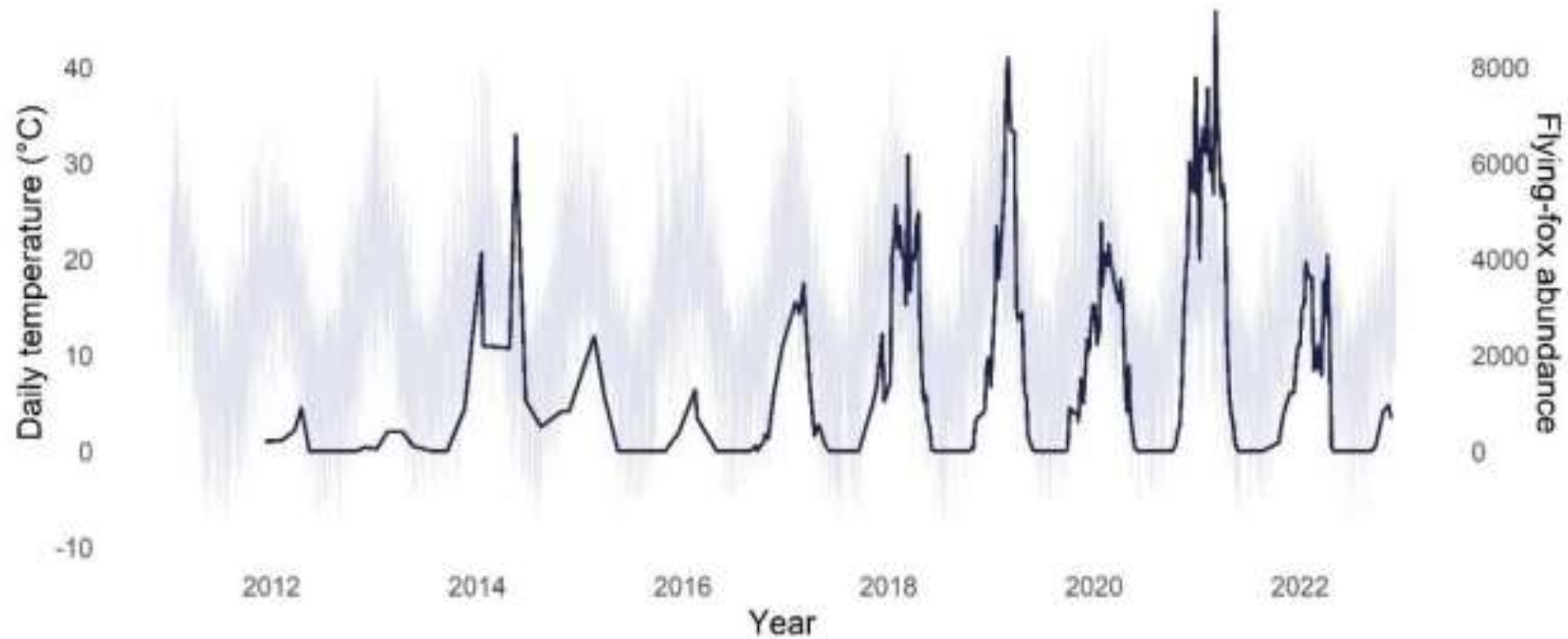
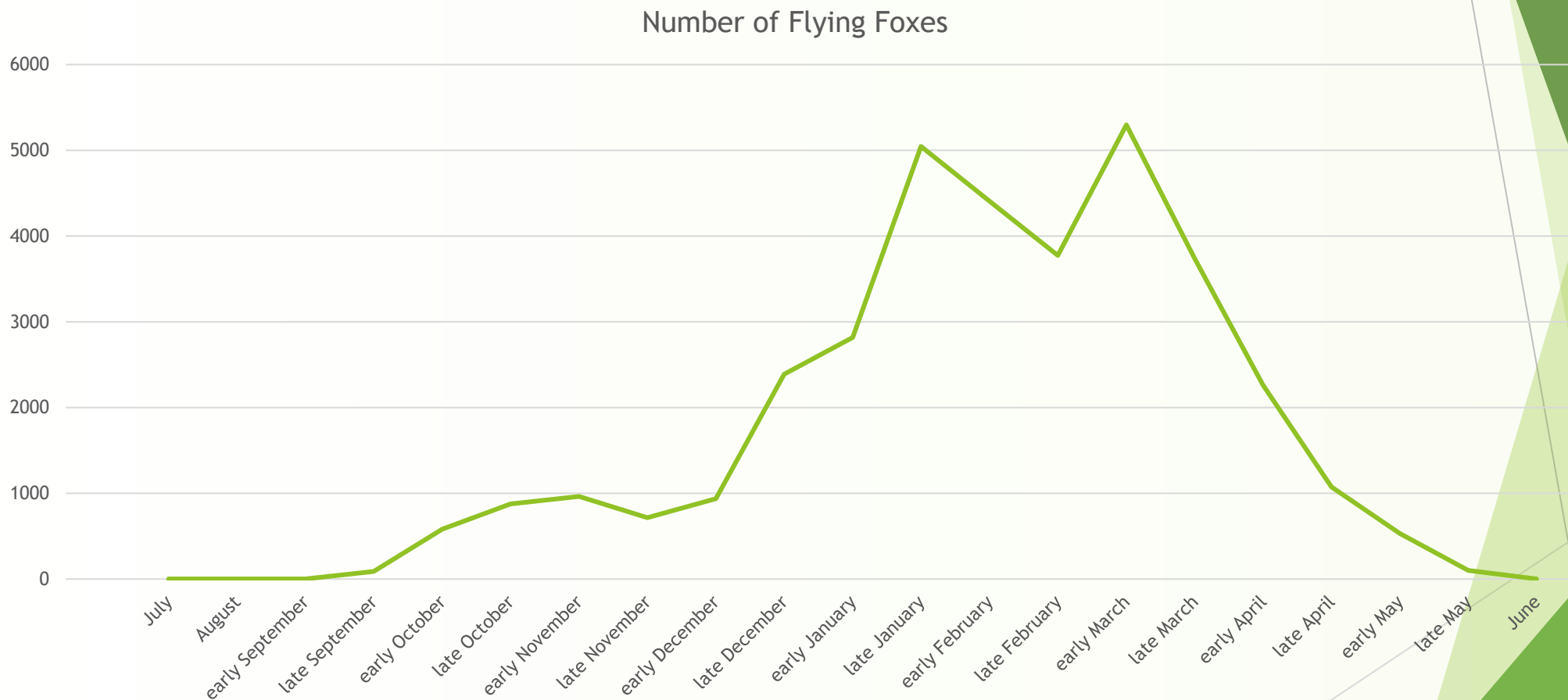


Figure 5 Number of flying-foxes (*Pteropus* species) recorded at the Commonwealth Park camp, Australian Capital Territory, based on 239 surveys conducted in the annual reporting periods between December 2011 and November 2022.

Source: ABS annual report to NCA & ACT, prepared by Belinda Wilson

2022-23 season



Source: ABS count

Spring 2022 - May 2023 season

- ▶ Cold snap events in Nov resulted in 31 pup deaths, all at the camp in Commonwealth Park
- ▶ Cross-border cooperation:
 - ▶ ACT Wildlife helped NSW wildlife groups by taking 15 orphan pups into care in October & November
 - ▶ ACT juveniles in care (often came in as pups) go to creche at NSW locations such as Shoalhaven Bat Hospital
 - ▶ Rehabilitating flying-foxes are transferred to Sydney in autumn as the weather cools and the ACT camp empties

Recent developments

- ▶ ACT government is developing a GHFF Conservation plan
 - ▶ Plan to release a draft for consultation in late October
- ▶ NCA has installed misters in the camp for hot weather events
 - ▶ Have not been required since installation due to mild summers
 - ▶ The system is however tested regularly, works well, and may be needed in coming summer

Netting - a problem

- ▶ Large aperture fruit netting incorrectly draped over fruit trees in backyards is a major cause of injury/death
- ▶ Victoria has legislation banning unsafe netting
- ▶ ACT government has taken note of this



ACT animal friendly netting legislation

- ▶ Minister has announced banning unfriendly wildlife netting
- ▶ Legislation is likely to
 - ▶ be introduced in 2023
 - ▶ ban large mesh netting in home gardens
 - ▶ not ban sale
 - ▶ require retailers who sell nets to display signs telling customers that wide aperture netting is prohibited



Net swap program

- ▶ ACT Wildlife will swap old netting for new safe netting in September/October 2023
 - ▶ ACT government grant \$25,000
 - ▶ ACT home gardeners eligible
 - ▶ Began September 2
 - ▶ Demand unknown
 - ▶ Requires intensive volunteer effort
 - ▶ 171 nets given out in first 3 days
 - ▶ Possibility of extension if demand high



Questions?



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