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SOUTH AUSTRALIA UPDATE

Jason Van Weenen and Moses Pillay | South Australia Government

NEW SOUTH WALES UPDATE

Matthew Mo | NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

ACT UPDATE

Stephen Bartos and Clare Wynter | ACT Wildlife

COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



POSTER - ON BOTH SIDES: PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING A GREY-HEADED FLYING-FOX (*PTEROPUS POLIOCEPHALUS*) VARYING THE SIDE ON WHICH SHE CARRIES HER PUP

Doug Gimesy, Justin Welbergen and Matthew Mo

Behavioural lateralisation, expressed as consistent left-right biases in sensory or motor behaviour, is widespread in animals and observed in mammals including humans in relation to parent-offspring interactions. In bats, mother-infant positioning has been documented primarily in roosting interactions, and individual-level consistency in the side of pup attachment during flight has rarely been assessed. Here, we present photographic evidence from the grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) of within-individual variation in pup attachment during flight. One individually identifiable female, recognised by a distinctive puncture in the wing membrane, was photographed with her pup attached on both the left and right sides on separate flight events. These observations show that the side on which a pup is carried during flight need not remain fixed across successive flight events in a given female, and they highlight the value of individual-level records for evaluating laterality in volant maternal care.

ADVANCING FLYING-FOX CONSERVATION ECOLOGY IN A CHANGING WORLD

Justin Welbergen | Western Sydney University

Managing flying-foxes requires a precarious balance between conservation and community concerns, supported by fundamental ecological understanding and applied knowledge for decision-making. In the Lab of Animal Ecology, we investigate the conservation ecology of Australian flying-foxes to address critical knowledge gaps and support sound management.

Our research has helped establish that accounting for the extreme mobility of flying-foxes is fundamental to sound conservation management, and has advanced understanding of roosting and foraging ecology, human-wildlife conflict and interactions with human infrastructure. We have translated our research into practical methods and tools, including drone and weather-radar methods for estimating abundance and an operational heat-stress forecaster. More recently, our work has focused on how flying-foxes respond to environmental change and on the ecophysiological mechanisms underpinning their highly mobile lifestyles, including responses to the Black Summer megafires and to challenges such as extreme heat and cold. In parallel, our work on the Critically Endangered Christmas Island flying-fox is advancing understanding of its fundamental ecology and population status.

This presentation outlines how we are bringing our applied work together in an integrated national flying-fox monitoring, forecasting and decision-support system. Building on the Australian Flying-Fox Monitor (AFFM), we are combining camp counts, tracking, drone surveys, weather radar, and satellite imagery to determine where flying-foxes are and how changing resources drive individual movements and continental-scale spatiotemporal population dynamics. We are also developing automated tools to derive counts from drone imagery, detect undocumented camps from radar, identify flowering trees from high-resolution aerial imagery, and map and forecast regional-scale flowering events from satellite remote sensing. The same work is being applied to flying-fox interactions with the wind-energy and aviation sectors to support risk assessment and mitigation. This integrated research and monitoring framework is intended to connect foraging-resource dynamics, individual movement decisions and emergent population redistribution across scales, helping move conservation management from retrospective understanding towards proactive, cross-jurisdictional decision support.



SEEING THE HEAT: THERMAL IMAGING REVEALS BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSES OF GREY-HEADED FLYING-FOXES TO HOT CONDITIONS

Melissa Walker | Murdoch University (in partnership with Deakin University)

As extreme heat events become more frequent and intense, understanding how wildlife copes with thermal stress is increasingly important. Thermal imaging provides an insightful and non-invasive approach for investigating the physiological and behavioural responses of free-ranging animals under natural conditions. This presentation will integrate findings from two recent studies using infrared thermography to investigate behavioural and thermal responses of wild grey-headed flying-foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) in Victoria, Australia.

The first study, conducted at the Bendigo flying-fox camp, examines how behavioural strategies, including posture and evaporative cooling behaviours, influence the bats surface temperatures to facilitate heat loss during hot conditions.

The second study, conducted along the Yarra River in Melbourne during extreme heat, describes an apparent social water-sharing behaviour following water acquisition through belly-dipping, highlighting a potential behavioural mechanism that may improve access to evaporative cooling and rehydration opportunities for vulnerable flying-foxes.

Together, these studies demonstrate how infrared thermography can reveal the complex interactions between behaviour, environment, and thermal physiology in wild mammals. By quantifying how flying-foxes modify heat exchange under challenging conditions, this work provides emerging insights into the mechanisms underlying thermal tolerance and the capacity of species to persist in warming climates.

THE IMPACTS OF EXTREME HEAT ON FLYING-FOXES – A SUMMARY OF MY PHD RESEARCH

Samantha Yabsley | Western Sydney University

Extreme heat events are a major and growing threat to Australian flying-foxes, with heat-related mass mortality events now occurring in most summers, and the frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme heat expected to increase under ongoing climate change. My PhD research broadly aimed to investigate the impacts of extreme heat events on flying-foxes by examining historical and future patterns of exposure at global and national camp-level scales, identifying landscape and vegetation characteristics that influence local thermal conditions, testing the effectiveness of sprinklers as a heat-mitigation strategy, and investigating the combined effects of temperature and humidity on thermoregulatory behaviour. We found that exposure to extreme heat is projected to increase substantially across the global distribution of flying-foxes, and across all Australian mainland flying-fox camps, yet exposure risk varied among species and camps. At Australian flying-fox camps, local conditions recorded within roost vegetation varied from broad-scale weather records. We found that higher proportions of artificial surface surrounding camps tended to increase daily maximum temperatures, whereas tall vegetation and more canopy cover tended to lower daily maximum temperatures. The sprinkler experiment showed promising results for the use of sprinklers in maintaining microclimatic conditions within known thermoregulatory responses of flying-foxes during an extreme heat event. Finally, behavioural analyses were used to develop a heat stress index for flying-foxes to further inform intervention methods. In this presentation, I bring together the major findings from my PhD research and discuss their implications for informing conservation management in the context of extreme heat events.



RENEWABLE ENERGY, EMERGING RISK: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OLD WORLD FRUIT BATS AND WIND TURBINES

Emma Bennett | Elmoby Ecology

Old World fruit bats (Pteropodidae) are ecologically important pollinators and seed dispersers, and include some of the world's most threatened bats. Their ranges also overlap regions experiencing rapid expansion of wind energy. Yet, compared with insectivorous bats in Europe and North America, remarkably little is known about their vulnerability to wind turbines.

This presentation provides a global update on what we currently know about interactions between Old World fruit bats and wind energy. Turbine fatalities have now been recorded in at least three pteropodid genera—*Pteropus*, *Rousettus* and *Epomophorus*—across Australia, Africa and Asia, including both widespread and threatened species. However, records remain sparse, geographically biased and frequently confined to operational monitoring datasets and grey literature. Whilst Australia has extensive post-construction monitoring data, and recent work in South Africa has begun to examine the population-level consequences of turbine mortality, across most of Asia, the Pacific and other centres of pteropodid diversity, empirical information remains extremely limited.

The traits that make Old World fruit bats extraordinary, long-distance movements, dynamic responses to ephemeral food resources and extensive nightly ranging, may also make conventional pre-construction surveys poor predictors of collision risk. Movement ecology, resource phenology, landscape connectivity and emerging detection technologies offer promising avenues for improving prediction and mitigation, but these approaches remain largely untested. Wind energy development is now expanding into regions supporting some of the world's most threatened fruit bats, including areas where biodiversity safeguards and post-construction monitoring may be limited. The opportunity exists to act before impacts become widespread. Sharing mortality data, standardising monitoring, improving movement and demographic information, developing predictive risk tools and collaboratively testing effective mitigation will be critical if the global transition to renewable energy is to occur without creating a new conservation threat for Old World fruit bats.

ANALYSIS OF LARGE-SCALE TELEMETRY DATASET TO QUANTIFY WIND TURBINE COLLISION RISK FOR THE GREY-HEADED FLYING-FOX

Jessica Meade¹, Pia E. Lentini², Eliane D. McCarthy¹, John M. Martin³, Justin A. Welbergen¹ | ¹ Western Sydney University, ²Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, ³The University of Sydney

The Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*; EPBC Act Vulnerable) is highly mobile across eastern and southern Australia, and has been assessed as high risk for wind-turbine collision, but empirical evidence to inform mitigation is limited. We analysed a large telemetry dataset for this species (109 individuals fitted with ARGOS satellite tags, 80 fitted with GPS collars with accelerometers, and a further 13 fitted with high-resolution GPS tags) to quantify flight heights, the impacts of wind speed on flight behaviours, and any avoidance behaviours around wind infrastructure. Mean night-time flight height above ground was 34.4 m (high-resolution GPS; n=13,706 filtered fixes) and 43.4 m (GPS/accelerometry; n=5,308 flying fixes). A substantial proportion of flight activity (58% of high-resolution and 51% of GPS/accelerometry flying fixes) occurred within current turbine rotor-swept heights (23–285 m). This broadly aligns with the national aircraft strike records, which report a mean strike height of 47 m for flying-foxes (all species). Flying fixes occurred at only slightly higher near-surface wind speeds than stationary fixes, and flight height decreased with increasing wind speed; at the nightly scale, higher wind, temperature and rainfall were associated with shorter maximum foraging distances. Across 631 animal-nights within 30 km of wind farms, we found no evidence that operational status influenced nightly foraging area or cumulative distance, and roost occupancy did not differ before versus after nearby wind farms became operational. These results indicate frequent exposure to rotor-swept heights and limited turbine avoidance, supporting development of evidence-based mitigation for flying-foxes at wind facilities.



THE LIFE OF BRIAN...AND DAVID: TWO FLYING-FOXES' CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE

Melissa Walker | Murdoch University (in partnership with Western Sydney University)

The welfare of free-living animals in scientific studies must always be in question: do procedures and devices deployed on wildlife negatively affect their welfare? In December 2018, we captured two wild, male grey-headed flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), given the names Brian and David, at Adelaide Botanic Park, South Australia. Brian and David, two of nine bats captured, were estimated to be 3 and 5 years old. We tagged the bats with thumb bands and surgically implanted a transmitter to monitor body temperature. Following release, body temperature data were collected (21 and 65 days, respectively). Brian was found deceased in June 2025, 6.5 years later, 2.6 km from the capture site. David was found deceased in April 2024, 5.3 years later, 9.4 km from the capture site. A necropsy was performed on each bat. This research note addresses the question: do thumb bands and transmitter implantation negatively affect the welfare of flying-foxes? Through Brian and David's case studies, detailing the procedures, physiological data and necropsy findings, we present observations to suggest that, in these individuals, these procedures and devices had negligible impacts. While the case of two individuals offers limited power for broader inference, long-term post-procedure data of telemetry-equipped animals is rare, making these observations valuable to report. We thank these bats' involuntary but valuable contribution to science and present this research note to celebrate the life of Brian and David.

THE STATUS OF THE AUSTRALIAN FLYING-FOX MONITOR (AFFM) 1 YEAR IN

Jessica Meade and Justin Welbergen | Western Sydney University

Flying-foxes move nomadically across jurisdictions, yet key conservation and management information has remained fragmented. We introduced the Australian Flying-Fox Monitor (AFFM) one year ago to restore a public-facing national platform for flying-fox monitoring, following the end of the National Flying-Fox Monitoring Program (NFFMP) in 2022 and the subsequent decommissioning of its public viewer. The AFFM now provides a public national view of camps, counts, tracking, and citizen-science data for all five Australian flying-fox species, together with a camp count submission pathway and tools for expert review. The dataset includes approximately 17,000 camp-count events from 1,200 camps, 1 million kilometres of tracking data, and 148,000 citizen-science observations. One year in, the AFFM has evolved into an operational decision-support system, supporting flying-fox conservation, informing management, and providing an integrated evidence base for research. It already supports new-camp discovery, wildlife-care response, consultant and camp-management work, and broader policy and planning, including review of the National Importance status of camps. It also provides the essential foundation for a growing suite of operational tools: a new interactive heat-stress forecaster, mobile field reporting, drone-based counting and mapping of camp footprints, radar monitoring of camp activity and possible new roosts, and satellite remote sensing of changes in camp vegetation structure and foraging resources. The next phase is consolidation: filling priority data gaps, establishing routine data contribution from all states, and capturing useful data collected outside quarterly survey rounds. This consolidation will help build the AFFM into an integrated national flying-fox monitoring and spatial-intelligence system that combines coordinated monitoring with expert review, timely operational information and spatial decision support. Its success will depend on sustained contributions from Commonwealth and state governments, alongside land managers, wildlife carers, consultants, researchers and the wider community, with the AFFM making those contributions more visible, connected and useful for management and conservation.



MONITORING OF THE SPECTACLED FLYING-FOX 2024 AND 2025

Andrew Dennis | Terrain Natural Resource Management

The Spectacled Flying-fox declined in numbers by 80% over 15 years and is now Endangered. Until recently, the population was monitored using ground counts at a subset of known camps. We developed and tested a new method, which included an expanded the number of camps that were checked for occupancy by Indigenous rangers before thermal imagery was collected by drone pilots. We developed a clear protocol and training for all aspects of data collection, demonstrated that thermal imagery works well in the tropics for this species, that thermal imagery sees about twice as many bats as ground counts, measured the error on counts from imagery by human observers, developed and a recogniser tool to count imagery automatically and found an increase in numbers of Spectacled Flying-foxes since the last estimate in 2019 and a further increase in numbers between 2024 and 2025. Our tracking of 30 Spectacled Flying-foxes is also identifying new camps, some that can be included in future censuses and some that are inaccessible but inform us on the proportion of camps counted during the census.

NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES IN LEGISLATION AND PLANNING TO PROTECT SPECTACLED FLYING-FOX ROOSTS

Maree Treadwell Kerr | Spectacled Flying-Fox Recovery Team

The Spectacled Flying Fox (SFF) is one of two EPBC-listed Australian mainland flying-fox species, found in north-eastern Queensland and coastal Papua New Guinea and nearby islands. The SFF is listed as Endangered under the EPBC, Queensland Nature Conservation Act and the IUCN, following a 75% decline in population between 2004 and 2017 and subsequent mortality of 23,000 individuals during one heat stress event in Cairns in November 2018.

Key threats to the Australian population include extreme heat events, cyclones, continuing habitat clearing for agriculture and residential development, existing and emerging diseases, paralysis tick poisoning, illegal shooting, human infrastructure including entanglement with discarded fishing lines, barbed wire and powerlines and emerging threats from wind farms.

While roosting habitat is not a limiting factor to the SFF population, protection of important roosts has been identified as a recommended action in both the draft Recovery Plan and the out-of-date but currently in force 2010 Recovery Plan under Actions 5.2 and 5.3.

The presentation will explore the significant challenges of protecting SFF roosts amongst the complexity of national, state and local flying-fox management and operational policies with a particular focus on the additional challenges posed by Queensland's planning legislation.

We will present three recent case studies in the Wet Tropics where planning legislation has approved development applications at flying-fox camps without public consultation or referral to the EPBC. This includes a development application at an historic nationally important camp in Port Douglas, a State code-accessible development application in Yungaburra and approval of an operational works permit to remove 31 of 36 roosting trees in a well-known camp that hosts up to 8,000 SFF for a community housing development project in Cairns.

We will describe grassroots conservation actions by the SFF Recovery Team and FNQ conservation partners to protect Spectacled Flying Fox roosting habitat.



WHEN SIZE DOESN'T MATTER: FLYING-FOX FRICTIONS AT A PRIVATE-TENURE CAMP IN REGIONAL NSW

Kylie Coutts-McClelland and Lorraine Oliver | NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Over the past decade, new Grey-headed flying-fox camps in NSW have increasingly established in urban and peri-urban areas. Based on history, this confluence of wildlife and human settlement leads to conflict, presenting a conservation management challenge. A camp wholly located across multiple private properties on the outskirts of Berry, NSW, first came to the attention of decision-making authorities in June 2019. Since then, the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW) and the Shoalhaven City Council (SCC) have collaborated, working with directly-impacted residents and those nearby to minimise impacts on both the residents and the flying-foxes. Management actions and regulatory responses delivered to date have operated within the legislative frameworks regulated by NSW DCCEEW and SCC. The camp is objectively small, with minimum population estimates of 75-5,300; the camp emptied during the cooler months for the first three years but has been mostly occupied since. Despite the size, residents nominate the same impacts experienced near much larger camps: noise, smell, faecal drop, sleep deprivation and damage to vegetation. There is also fear of disease/health concerns, a loss of amenity, and strong concerns around property devaluation, the latter two exacerbated by the camp being wholly on private tenure. A series of extreme heat stress events in early 2020 resulted in >1,000 dead flying-foxes in residents' yards. Such events are distressing, particularly for the residents, and the camp remains extremely vulnerable to future heat events.

Personal management decisions of any given resident have the potential to directly impact other nearby residents at the local scale; NSW DCCEEW and SCC consider the impacts of management decisions at both the local and landscape scale. There is an ongoing expectation from residents that NSW DCCEEW and SCC will continue their involvement in supporting residents to eliminate impacts, while NSW DCCEEW and SCC evaluate if there is any realistic way to reduce impacts that meets each individual resident's expectations of a satisfactory outcome. A 'small' camp on private land with 20+ highly engaged stakeholders is not small at all.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PROTECT, CONSERVE, AND ENHANCE URBAN FLYING-FOX ROOSTING HABITAT?

Jess Gorrington | Wild Solutions Ecology

Flying-foxes play a critical ecological role in pollination and seed dispersal, yet their long-term persistence in urban and peri-urban landscapes depends on the protection and functionality of roosting habitat. As urbanisation continues to expand and community expectations evolve, the pressures on urban flying-fox roosts are intensifying. Some urban colonies face conflict in the forms of attempts at dispersal and environmental vandalism, whereas others decline slowly from well-intentioned avoidance of disturbance resulting in unchecked weed proliferation, structural decline, and eventual habitat collapse.

This presentation explores the question of what it takes to protect, conserve, and enhance flying-fox roosting habitat in a changing landscape. Drawing on long-term monitoring observations, urban roost management experience, and examples from Queensland, it examines the drivers of urban roost habitat decline. Key themes include balancing ecological needs with community expectations, land management practices with animal welfare, and preparing for events that can rapidly reshape roost form and function.



A VIEW FROM THE TOP END: A BIG YEAR FOR NORTHERN-TERRITORY FLYING-FOXES

Laura Sewell | Wildlife carer

2026 has been an eventful year, with two unusual events providing insights into the health and vulnerabilities of NT bats and the value of connecting with the wider flying fox community.

When ex-Tropical Cyclone Narelle passed over Pine Creek, flying fox rescuers were confronted with hundreds of dead and dying black flying fox pups. Within days, similar situations were reported in Katherine and Tindal. The pups were emaciated and severely compromised with many showing signs of secondary infections. Over the next three weeks, thousands of dependent pups perished with only a few hundred able to be rescued. With no established carers in the region, rescued pups were transferred hundreds of kilometres to Darwin where the small bat rehabilitation network was quickly overwhelmed. When NT authorities refused permission for the pups to be airlifted to carers in Queensland, interstate rescue organisations sent volunteers to Darwin to provide urgent training and hands-on support.

The disaster has been attributed to the disruptive impact of severe weather on food availability leading to mass abandonment. With no population data or monitoring, the total mortality of this event cannot be quantified but likely represents the majority of the year's cohort in the region.

Meanwhile, Darwin carers and veterinary clinics have recorded dozens of adult black flying foxes presenting with clinical signs consistent with flying fox paralysis syndrome (FFPS). FFPS is previously unrecorded in the NT, however the existing FFPS Triage and Treatment Protocol has proved directly applicable in managing these bats.

FROM CONFLICT TO COEXISTENCE: THE SUNSHINE COAST FLYING-FOX MANAGEMENT PLAN AS A BENCHMARK FOR HUMAN-WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

Tyron de Kauwe | Sunshine Coast Council

Urban flying fox management remains one of the most challenging human-wildlife conflict issues faced by Australian local governments. Practitioners are increasingly required to balance community expectations, legislative obligations, animal welfare considerations, and meaningful conservation outcomes within highly contested urban environments.

The Draft Sunshine Coast Council Flying Fox Management Plan (FFMP) represents the culmination of more than a decade of management experience, research, monitoring, community engagement, and adaptive learning. Developed following a comprehensive ten-year program review, the Plan incorporates independent expert review, practitioner input, stakeholder co-design, and public consultation to establish a contemporary framework for managing flying fox roosts across a rapidly growing urban landscape.

The Plan signals a broader shift from reactive wildlife management towards proactive coexistence, emphasising community empowerment, strategic land-use planning, evidence-based decision making, education, research, and One Health principles. The framework integrates conservation objectives with practical measures that assist residents living near roosts, while strengthening governance, transparency, program accountability, and regional collaboration.

This presentation will outline the Plan's development, key innovations, implementation framework, and lessons learned. It will explore how evidence-based decision making, transparent prioritisation, and community-centred approaches can improve both conservation and social outcomes. The presentation offers transferable insights for practitioners seeking scalable and defensible approaches to managing complex human-wildlife conflicts in increasingly urbanised landscapes.



KOOLOONBUNG CREEK FLYING-FOX CAMP: EMERGING TRENDS, CULTURAL CONNECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Byron Reynolds | Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

Since adoption of the Kooloonbung Creek Flying Fox Camp Management Plan in 2019, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has continued to monitor and manage one of New South Wales' most dynamic urban flying fox camps. Through regular census monitoring and implementation of management actions, the camp has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of balancing flying fox conservation with community expectations.

This presentation will provide an update on the outcomes of the management plan review and highlight emerging trends observed over recent years. Seasonal fluctuations in camp occupancy continue to be strongly influenced by flowering events, particularly the arrival of large numbers of Little Red Flying-foxes, which can increase camp numbers from a few thousand individuals to more than 100,000 during peak periods. Monitoring has also identified notable changes in roost occupancy and distribution within the reserve, prompting discussion around possible longer-term shifts in camp location and habitat preference.

The presentation will explore habitat management initiatives including Cocos Palm removal, ongoing restoration works and the growing importance of strategic land-use planning in reducing future land-use conflicts around existing and potential flying fox camps.

Community education and cultural interpretation have also become important elements of camp management. A short video showcasing the ecology of the Kooloonbung Creek camp and its Little Red Flying-fox visitors will be presented alongside recently installed dual-language interpretive signage featuring Gathang language, First Nations storytelling and artwork that recognises the cultural significance of Gulanbang (Kooloonbung Creek) and its flying fox populations.

This case study highlights the value of long-term monitoring, adaptive management and cultural partnerships in supporting coexistence with flying foxes in an increasingly urban landscape.

EVALUATION OF SUBSHINE COAST COUNCIL'S FLYING-FOX AMENITY IMPACT REDUCTION (FAIR) GRANT PROGRAM

Andrew Smith | Sunshine Coast Council

Key human-wildlife conflict issues for people living adjacent to flying fox roosts include noise from flying fox vocalisations, odour from scent marking and faecal droppings, faecal deposition on property, loss of amenity, and concerns about zoonotic disease. For wildlife managers, balancing Commonwealth and State legislative responsibilities to protect these ecologically important native bats while assisting affected residents presents an ongoing challenge.

Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) has addressed this challenge through its Flying-fox Amenity Impact Reduction (FAIR) Grant program, which has provided financial support since 2021 to residents living adjacent to SCC managed flying fox roosts to purchase items that reduce impacts. The program provides one-off funding of up to \$3,000 for eligible residents, with eligible businesses receiving up to \$9,000. All applicants can co-contribute towards higher-cost items. Since commencement, \$139,000 has been allocated across nine funding rounds, with \$93,360 provided to residents. Funded items have included water treatment devices, pool covers, vehicle covers, carports, high-pressure water cleaners, professional cleaning services, and double glazing.

SCC is currently reviewing its Regional Flying Fox Management Plan (RFFMP), which includes a proposal to restrict FAIR Grant eligibility to residents directly affected by high-conflict roosts. To support this review, SCC is evaluating whether limiting eligibility to high-conflict roosts represents a justified and equitable approach to resource allocation, and whether current grant values adequately address the amenity impacts experienced by residents.

This review will examine grant uptake, items purchased, and applicant responses provided during the grant acquittal process. The evaluation will assess effectiveness of the Grants in addressing impacts and the implications of only targeting roosts experiencing the greatest levels of conflict. Findings will support using evidence-based decision-making during the RFFMP review to balance community wellbeing with flying fox conservation outcomes.



WAS IT A FREE FOR ALL? OPENING OUR LIVING WITH FLYING-FOXES GRANTS PROGRAM TO THE ENTIRE REGION

Beth Cox | Gladstone Regional Council

Like other Councils in Queensland, Gladstone Regional Council offer financial assistance to residents impacted by flying-foxes, and we do so through our Living with Flying-foxes Grants Program. After delivering the program in 2024, where only residents in close proximity to high conflict roosts were eligible, it was determined that the distance someone lives from a roost is not necessarily a reliable indicator of how flying-foxes are perceived by a resident. The sentiment toward flying-foxes is highly subjective and shifts depending on personal values, preconceived ideas, and individual circumstances. Following this realisation, we altered our program guidelines to enable anyone who lives or owns property in the Gladstone region to apply for funding, irrespective of their proximity to a roost. This presentation will discuss the evolution of our program, including the scoring system we developed, justification for the eligibility changes, and the presentation will reveal if the release was in fact, a free for all.

BATTY TALES: FROM ZERO TO BEYOND: A REGIONAL VICTORIAN STORY ABOUT FORMING THE CENTRAL VICTORIAN BAT ALLIANCE, A NON-PROFIT VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY BAT ADVOCACY GROUP

Julie Sloan | Central Victorian Bat Alliance

Batty Tales is our story about forming Central Victorian Bat Alliance, a bat advocacy group on Djandak, the traditional Country of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. We are a non-profit, volunteer community group supporting all bats and Bendigo's nationally important Grey-headed Flying-fox camp. We love bats; in 2023 when community consultation identified the need for a bat advocacy group we stepped up to help form the group. Our small group started from Zero with its most important assets – people, passion, unity, shared vision to conserve Flying-foxes and bats - we were ready for the journey! Our ability to deliver integrated, comprehensive activities was limited in the beginning. Reasons included unsupportive infrastructure, limited governance framework, unsustainable dependency on like-groups who supported our event participation, and zero finances! The need for our group to be safe, capable, sustainable and funded was evident, and urgent. Why? Because the bats were depending on us! From Zero, we used our skills and sought guidance to develop our values and purpose, governance structures, local partnerships, and community collaboration. We aligned with key strategies to support our purpose 'Enhancing biodiversity and conservation outcomes for all bats through advocacy, education and community awareness' and fostered harmony and coexistence as our membership grew. Shared vision remains our strength. From Zero, we informed community understanding and strengthened community action for bats by using evidence based information to help debunk unfounded myth and fear, counter misinformation, and dispel stereotypes. From Zero, we flowed from beginner, to Beyond and established – we held our community launch at Bendigo Library and inaugural AGM in 2025. To Beyond, Central Victorian Bat Alliance has an obligation to be adaptable and proactive in order to address current and emerging needs of Flying-foxes, all bats and our community. Welcome to Batty Tales - from Zero to Beyond.

INTRODUCING BATS VICTORIA: HARNESSING THE CORNERSTONES OF ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION FOR A SAFER FUTURE FOR VICTORIA'S FLYING-FOXES

Emma Hood | Bats Victoria

Bats Victoria was established in response to a pivotal moment for flying-fox conservation in Victoria. A rapidly changing political landscape collided consecutive years of environmental impacts, culminating in the most significant series of flying-fox heat stress events since 2019. This exposed the challenges facing wildlife carers, conservation advocates and government, demonstrating the urgent need for a stronger, coordinated voice for bats.



These events were one of several catalysts for establishing Bats Victoria while also highlighted something equally important: the extraordinary support from volunteers, communities and thousands of people who value and want to protect Victoria's bats.

That groundswell of support provided the foundation for a new organisation focused on the three critical pillars needed to drive lasting change: advocacy, education and rehabilitation.

This presentation will introduce Bats Victoria, sharing why the organisation was formed, our strategic vision. We can share how formal recognition of our work has strengthened our capacity to rescue and rehabilitate more bats. It's enabled us to support more wildlife carers, deliver evidence-based education, and advocate more effectively for improved conservation and animal welfare outcomes. We will reflect on lessons learned from recent large-scale rescue responses that made global media, and share learnings on how our political and community is already paving the way for a kinder, more resilient future for flying-foxes.

Importantly, we will share how Bats Victoria plans to not only to keep flying-foxes firmly on the political agenda during one of the most tumultuous times in Victorian politics (including how we captured the support of the now Premier!), but also in the hearts and minds of Victorians and the growing community of people around Australia and the world who recognise their uniqueness and importance.

LEARNING THROUGH ART AND PLAY: ENGAGING CHILDREN WITH FLYING-FOX CONSERVATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Fernanda Tique Bernal, Wildlife Biologist

Flying foxes provide essential ecosystem services as long-distance pollinators and seed dispersers, yet their presence near urban communities can generate misunderstanding, concern and conflict. Creating positive learning experiences from an early age can help children and their families better understand these animals and support their conservation. This presentation shares the development of environmental education initiatives being delivered in collaboration with Lake Macquarie City Council and Singleton Council in New South Wales. The programs combine scientific information with visual storytelling, creative activities and play. Workshop activities include illustrated presentations, photography, pollination games, origami, stamp printing, colouring, puzzles and other interactive challenges. Through these experiences, children learn about flying-fox biology, ecological roles, native food plants, threats and practical ways communities can coexist with them. A key extension of this work is an original children's activity book currently in development, Meet Our Flying-fox Neighbours, written and illustrated by wildlife biologist Fernanda Tique Bernal. The book combines accessible scientific information and original illustrations with colouring pages, mazes, word games and other activities that encourage children to learn while playing. By introducing flying-foxes as important and fascinating neighbours, rather than unfamiliar or threatening animals, the project seeks to nurture curiosity, empathy and connection with local biodiversity.

The presentation will discuss lessons from creating scientifically accurate, locally relevant and age-appropriate resources, as well as the potential of art and play to support community engagement. This approach provides a practical and adaptable model for councils, educators and conservation practitioners seeking to encourage positive attitudes and coexistence with flying-foxes.

BEYOND MANAGEMENT: BUILDING REHABILITATION CAPACITY AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF FLYING-FOX CONSERVATION

Sonja Elwood | NSW Wildlife Council

Flying-foxes are increasingly challenged by habitat loss, urbanisation, climate change, heat stress and starvation events, entanglement, disease outbreaks and conflict with human communities. Much of the discussion surrounding flying-fox conservation has focused on understanding and managing these threats, yet comparatively little attention has been given to the capacity required to rescue, treat and rehabilitate affected animals.



Across Australia, thousands of flying-foxes are rescued, treated and rehabilitated each year by highly skilled volunteers operating with limited resources. Beyond improving the welfare of individual animals, wildlife rehabilitators contribute to conservation by responding to mass mortality events, supporting disease surveillance and population monitoring, providing valuable field observations, engaging communities and maintaining specialised knowledge and expertise that cannot be rapidly replaced.

This presentation argues that wildlife rehabilitation should be recognised as an essential component of flying-fox conservation rather than solely an animal welfare service. By improving survival following injury and extreme weather events, contributing to surveillance and monitoring, strengthening community engagement and maintaining a skilled emergency response workforce, rehabilitation complements existing conservation, research and management programs. Despite this critical role, Australia has made little strategic investment in building and sustaining flying-fox rehabilitation capacity. Investment in regional rehabilitation facilities and equipment, volunteer training, emergency preparedness, vaccination programs, collaborative partnerships and sustainable funding would strengthen Australia's ability to respond to future challenges while supporting the long-term conservation of flying-fox populations.

As environmental pressures continue to intensify, rehabilitation is emerging as a critical component of conservation resilience. Recognising and investing in this often-overlooked capability will improve outcomes not only for individual animals, but also for flying-fox populations, the volunteer workforce that supports them, and the long-term conservation of these ecologically significant species.

CROSS-REGION RESCUE OF BATS IN QLD: WHAT HAVE WE SEEN OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS?

Karly Fowler | Bat Conservation and Rescue QLD

Bat Conservation & Rescue QLD Inc. (BCRQ) is one of QLD's largest bat conservation organisations by members and rescue catchment area.

On average each year, our hotline receives over 3,300 calls from the community for bats in trouble, or bat advice. Of this, our members attend an annual average of over 1,800 rescues (all bat species) across >20 local government areas (over 25% of QLD).

This presentation will share some of our call and rescue data from the past five years, including temporal, climatic and rescue-cause trends, region-specific observations, emerging threats within our catchment (FFPS), and the role wildlife rescue organisations play in fostering informed and conflict-resilient communities.

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