

Never approach or handle sick, dead or injured flying-foxes. Contact NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Education Service (WIRES) on 1300 094 737 or Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Service on 9413 4300.

Future management

Flying-foxes are generally managed best by allowing people and flying-foxes to co-exist. Relocation of camps has not been very successful in the past and has often resulted in other problems.

The flying-fox has only recently established camps within the Campbelltown LGA. Whether or not these camps are temporary or more permanent is largely unknown. Council will continue to monitor known camps within the LGA to determine how they are used by flying-foxes now and into the future. The outcome of this program will guide future management of these areas.

For more information about the Grey-headed Flying-fox, visit:

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/flyingfoxes

NSW Department of Environment and Conservation
www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au

Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities
www.environment.gov.au



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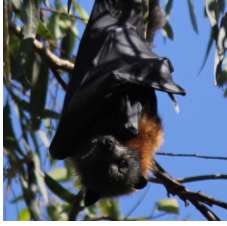
wildlife fact sheet

Grey-headed Flying-fox (Pteropus poliocephalus)



a city of choice and opportunity in a natural environment

The Grey-headed Flying-fox is a nomadic mammal found only on the east coast of Australia, from Bundaberg in Queensland to Melbourne in Victoria.



The species is easily recognisable by its rusty reddish-coloured collar and grey head. The extensive and continued clearing of native vegetation in eastern Australia has substantially removed areas historically used by flying-foxes for roosting and foraging purposes and, as a result, they are increasingly establishing camps in suburban areas.

Interesting facts

The Grey-headed Flying-fox is the largest flying-fox found in Australia, weighing up to one kilogram, with a head to body length of 23 to 29 centimetres and a wing span of up to one metre.

They breed once a year, with mating commencing in January. At the age of two to three years females can give birth to a single young, known as a pup, usually around late September. The young are dependent on their mother until they are about five months old (January to February). Unfortunately many young flying foxes do not live beyond two years of age.

The main food source is the nectar and pollen of the eucalypt, turpentine, angophora, melaleuca and Banksia species. Commercial fruit also forms part of their diet when available. Most individuals feed within a 30 kilometre radius of their camp, however, they can fly up to 100 kilometres during the night.

The Grey-headed Flying-fox can fly at speeds of up to 30 kilometres per hour. They navigate by sight and their excellent sense of smell helps them locate food.

Why is the grey-headed flying-fox protected?

Due to clearing of their traditional habitat, the number of Grey-headed Flying-fox is believed to have decreased by more than 30 per cent over the last 10 years. They are listed as a 'vulnerable' species under both the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Why are they important?

Grey-headed Flying-foxes are important pollinators and seed dispersers for many native trees, including commercially important hardwood and rainforest species. They contribute directly to the sustainability and ecological processes of rainforests, woodlands and wetlands by providing habitat for other flora and fauna species and adding value to the hardwood timber, honey and native flower industries.

Why do they roost in large numbers?

These areas are known as 'camps' and are usually chosen due to their proximity to food and water sources. Safety in numbers is vital for breeding and raising young. These areas also act as stopover sites for migrating flying-foxes so they form an important part of a larger network of camps.

What is that smell?

The odour from flying-fox camps is often thought to be caused by faeces or urine, but this is not the case. It comes from an odour the males secrete from glands when they are competing with each other for females and roosting sites. Young flying-foxes also emit a scent which enables their mothers to locate them.

Noise

Flying-foxes use sound to communicate with each other. Camps are usually the noisiest at dawn and dusk as the flying-foxes arrive and depart. They are generally quieter at night and during the day. Roaming dogs, machinery, birds and people can also disturb camps, causing movement and noise from the flying-foxes.

Health issues

Flying-foxes are timid animals and will not approach people intentionally. They are known hosts of the Australian bat Lyssavirus and the Hendra Virus, which can be harmful to humans. Transmission of the Lyssavirus is thought to be by a scratch or bite, or exposure to flying-fox saliva through the eyes, mouth or nose. It is unlikely to survive outside the flying-fox for more than a few hours. Currently there is no evidence that Hendra Virus can be passed directly from flying-foxes to humans. The only known way humans can contract the virus is from direct contact with the respiratory secretions and/or blood of an infected horse. It is thought that horses contract the virus from food recently contaminated by flying-fox urine, saliva or faeces.

To minimise your health risk and disturbance to the Grey-headed Flying-fox, you should exercise caution within their presence, including:

- > Do not approach or handle a flying-fox. If bitten or scratched, wash the area thoroughly and apply antiseptic solution. See your doctor immediately.
- > Do not place animal food or water bowls under trees where flying-foxes may forage or roost.
- > Do not eat fruit or vegetables that have been partially consumed by flying-foxes or contaminated by their droppings. Appropriately net fruit trees and vegetable patches.
- > Prevent dogs and cats having contact with them (dead or alive).
- > After handling horses, wash your hands with soap and water and dry, or use hand wipes or hand sanitiser.
- > Avoid any contact with sick horses.

