

BATS - THE FACTS



Bats (or Flying-foxes) are vital to our ecosystem. They pollinate many of our commercially important hardwood forest trees and disperse the seeds of rainforest fruits.

Some birds and bees have similar roles as pollinators and seed dispersers, but they are not able to move freely across fragmented, degraded and urban landscapes, nor travel the vast distances that flying-foxes can – that's why the flying-foxes play such an essential role in our forest ecology.

The number of flying-foxes in a colony increases in line with how much food is available in the

surrounding area at the time. Flying-foxes will go where their food source is. No food in the area - no flying-foxes in the area. Abundant blossom available – abundant flying-foxes in the area. It's that simple! The majority of flying-foxes in a colony will move on when the food source from native fruit and flowers is finished for the season.

Disease & Flying-foxes



- Animals may carry bacteria and viruses that can be harmful to humans. **Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL)** is a virus that can be transmitted via the saliva of infected bats.
- Less than 1% of the flying-fox population carries ABL
- The risk of humans contracting ABL is extremely small
- The only way you can contract ABL is by being bitten or scratched from a bat that actively has the virus
- Do not disturb bats. Do not handle bats.
- If you are scratched or bitten by a bat contact your doctor for advice.
- Flying-foxes have been found to be a carrier of **Hendra virus**, however, there is no evidence of humans contracting Hendra virus directly from flying-foxes
- Hendra virus is spread from horses to humans, not flying-foxes to humans
- It is not known how the Hendra virus is transmitted from bats to horses
- Hendra virus is rare and extremely difficult for horses and subsequently humans to contract

Be Bat Wise

- You cannot catch any bat-borne diseases from living next to, or co-existing with a flying-fox colony
- The risk of flying-foxes transmitting disease to humans is extremely low.
- The smell coming from a colony is made from the scent gland on the flying-fox, used to mark territory and to attract a mate
- Flying-foxes are noisiest in the early hours of the morning when they return to their roost positions, and mothers are calling to locate their babies. This is also when general social interaction occurs in the colony
- Flying-foxes have a low population rate having only one baby per year
- Flying-fox babies can live for a short time on injured or even dead mothers, so if you see an injured flying-fox, call your local wildlife group and report it
- Despite popular belief that flying-foxes prefer orchard and backyard fruit, the fact is their main food source is the blossom of eucalypts and paperbarks
- The Grey-headed flying-fox is decreasing in numbers, which is why it has been placed on the Threatened Species List.



www.wildlifesos.org.au