

LEARNING TO LOVE THE FLYING-FOX AS LITTLE AUSSIE BATTLERS START MOVING IN

A public awareness campaign aimed at highlighting the critical role of the flying-fox in the survival of Australian bush **will be/was launched on XXXX** as colonies of native mammals begin to make their presence felt in residential areas.

The 'Little Aussie Battlers' campaign is an initiative of the Hunter Joint Organisation and Councils of the Hunter and Central Coast region created to boost understanding of the migratory habits of the flying-fox, as they increasingly roost in residential areas as land clearing destroys native habitats and drives the species to urban areas to roost and feed.

The 'Little Aussie Battlers' campaign is drawing attention to three species of the flying-fox: the vulnerable grey-headed flying-fox, the little red flying-fox, and the black flying-fox, all of which are protected by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act.

The grey-headed flying-fox, which is extremely susceptible to climatic changes and loss of habitat due to land clearing, is now federally classed as 'Vulnerable to Extinction', with its national population declining by more than 30% in the past few years.

Despite their status as a protected native species, flying-foxes are rapidly losing their habitat to land clearing, and are extremely susceptible to climatic changes – they can literally drop dead out of the trees if the temperature reaches more than 42 degrees – and the drought has exacerbated their plight.

It is hoped a greater understanding of these Little Aussie Battlers will improve tolerance as affected communities recognise the seasonal nature of flying-fox migration and the vital role this threatened species play in our ecosystem.

XXXX Council's Environmental Officer XXX XXXX said while it could be unpleasant for residents and communities who had camps of flying-foxes nearby, it was a temporary situation that called for some tolerance and patience.

'But now is the time to prep your garden and yards for the arrival of the flying-foxes,' **XXXX** said. 'There are some preparations you can take to make living with flying-foxes a little easier.'

IN YOUR BACKYARD:

If you experience an individual or small group of flying-foxes feeding at night in your garden, this will likely occur until the tree has finished fruiting. If you do not want flying-foxes feeding in your backyard, remove the fruit manually or properly net the tree to make access for the flying-foxes difficult. There are simple, non-harmful deterrents which may be of assistance on your property, such as:

- Creating a visual/sound/smell barrier with fencing or hedges with plants that do not produce edible fruit or nectar-exuding flowers
- Planting a buffer of low vegetation such as shrubs, providing a screen between your yard and roosting /feeding trees
- Placing predator decoys (eg owls) or reflective/shiny deterrents (eg CDs or aluminium foil strips) on verandas or in trees

- Keeping food or habitat trees trimmed
- When landscaping, plant fruit or habitat trees away from your home (or don't use these plants at all).

TIPS FOR LIVING WITH FLYING FOX-NEIGHBOURS:

- Don't disturb them – they make more noise when stressed
- Do not directly handle a dead flying-fox – wear thick gloves, wrap it in a plastic bag and wash your hands
- Don't keep food and water for pets (particularly horses) under trees
- Cover your cars, washing and outdoor areas as droppings are pungent and corrosive
- Contact your local wildlife rescue group if you find an injured flying-fox
- **Remove horses from paddocks where flying-foxes are roosting or feeding – RURAL COUNCILS ONLY**

Flying-foxes typically migrate across the Eastern seaboard following the fruiting and flowering seasons of rainforests and the flowering season of paperbark and eucalyptus forests. Contrary to popular belief, they do not pose any major health risks unless people are bitten or scratched.

'Flying-foxes are keystone pollinators and seed dispersers of the Australian bush,' **Mr/Ms XXXX** said.

'They have the job of propagating more than 100 species of native trees and plants along the East Coast of Australia - without them, food and shelter for koalas, habitats for native birds and other fauna and, our magnificent forests would be at risk.'

Mr/Ms XXXX said councils and wildlife services were working together in an attempt to reduce the impact of flying-foxes on urban areas and agricultural producers.

'With a little more knowledge and understanding, we believe we can overcome the issues that arise all along the migration route across the east coast,' **he/she** said.

Throughout the year, flying-foxes migrate to wherever their feed plants are flowering, meaning local camp numbers fluctuate from season to season, year to year.

Like FIFO workers – flying-foxes fly in and fly out, working the night shift and leaving their camps at dusk to feed on flowering or fruiting plants and trees, then spreading these seeds up to a 50km stretch of land every night before heading back to camp to sleep through the day.

'We hope our communities can allow these Little Aussie Battlers to continue to do their incredible job of maintaining the health of our magnificent Australian native forests and ensuring the well-being and survival of our unique Australian native flora and fauna.'

Visit the council's website for more information on management tips at **XXXXXX** or visit <http://littleaussiebat.com.au>

Media: Council contact