



CONTACT CENTRE PHONE SCRIPT

GENERAL: RESPONDING TO GENERAL ENQUIRIES ABOUT FLYING-FOXES IN THE AREA/ NOTICED AN INCREASE IN THEM IN THE LOCAL AREA.

Questions/Responses.

Q. There seems to be more bats in the area lately – is that anything to worry about/ why is that?

Ah, yes, the Little Aussie Battlers.

Yes, there are a few species of Flying-foxes that migrate in and out of our region. The grey-headed flying-fox, the little red and the black flying-fox.

Their numbers tend to swell when there is a flowering or fruiting of their feed-plants nearby.

They pose no real health risk to humans – unless you are bitten or scratched by one, and they are not naturally aggressive, so just using common sense and giving them some space, like you would any wild animal, and there is no real cause for alarm.

Q. But why are they coming here? They haven't before.

Their natural habitat is the bush, but their loss of habitat (through clearing, industry, population growth and climactic changes) means they are increasingly having to set up camp near towns in search of food and shelter, and that's why we're seeing more of them.

Q. They're smelly and noisy, can't you just move them on?

These Little Aussie Battlers are actually a really important native species. Not many people realise it, but they are keystone pollinators of the Australian Bush. They are the sole propagators of over 100 species of native trees and plants. So the Australian bushland we know and love wouldn't be here without them. So we really have to manage them carefully.

And their numbers are in decline – the Grey-headed Flying-Foxes are listed as vulnerable to extinction – and that would be disastrous for the bush.

And they are a protected native species – like Koalas – and that's why we don't move them on. You can find information on environmental law and legislation, as well as tips on how to co-exist with them at litteaussiebat.com.au.

Q. What sort of information are you talking about?

Simple deterrents if you're experiencing them in your backyard, how to dispose of them if you find dead one, what to do if you are accidentally bitten or scratched, things like that.

Q. What about my pets?

It's best not to leave pets food and water bowls outside under areas where Flying-foxes are feeding or roosting.

And if you have horses, it's best to fence off the roosting and feeding trees, as although it's very rare there is a slight risk that horses can contract Hendra virus from flying-foxes, and that can be passed on from horses to humans as well. So better to be safe.

Q. Why are you calling them 'Little Aussie Battlers'?

Because they are the Little Aussie Battlers of our Great Australian Bush. They do an incredibly important job, they work really hard on the night shift, each one of them can spread up to 60,000 seed across an area of 50 kilometres very night. The survival of the entire Australian Bush ecosystem rests on their tiny little shoulders, and their numbers are in decline, so any way you look at it, they are battling for survival. That's why we call them the Little Aussie Battlers.

Q. So there's nothing you can do?

Well, there is a lot of information about them on our website, littleaussiebat.com.au, and am happy to send out a brochure to you.

I guess the bottom line is that the survival of the flying-fox is crucial to the survival of our Great Australian Bush, so what we are trying to do, all around the country, is work together with communities to find ways we can co-exist, because we really can't live without them.

EMERGENCY/ IRATE CALLS:

Q. These little pests are destroying my home and my sanity – cant you just come and get rid of them?

So there has been an increase in numbers lately?

Option A: Yes

It's most likely there is a flowering event in their food plants close by and greater numbers have migrated into your area to feed on these plants. If that's the case, numbers should drop back to previous levels once the food is gone.

Option B: No they are just always here

The flying-fox is crucial to the survival of the Australian bush – they are keynote pollinators of over 100 native trees and plants. Their usual home is in the bush, but with loss of habitat, they are increasingly setting up camps close to towns in search of food and shelter. It is an issue that is happening all along the east coast.

Flying Foxes are a protected native species, like koalas, and in fact are vulnerable to extinction, so we can't just remove them or cull them I'm afraid.

Q. But what about my family's health?

The good news is, they pose no real health risk to humans – unless you are bitten or scratched by one, and they are not naturally aggressive, so just using common sense and giving them some space, like you would any wild animal, and there is no real cause for alarm.

If you have pets, just make sure their water and food isn't outside where flying-foxes are feeding or roosting.

Q. What can I do?

There are tips on how to live with flying foxes on our website – littleaussiebat.com.au and I can send out a flyer to you with more information and tips on how to live with them if you like?

Q. What are you going to do about it?

Each council to determine their own course of action here.