



FLYING-FOXES

IN THE TOWNSVILLE REGION

ABOUT FLYING-FOXES

There are four flying-fox species native to Australia and all are protected under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Flying-foxes are a highly social and intellectual mammal. You may hear them talking to each other at all times of the day or night. Their sense of hearing, sight and smell are exceptional, allowing them to communicate with their young, and to navigate and find food over significant distances.

They feed on the fruit and blossoms of over 100 native species. Flying-foxes transport seeds in their gut and pollen on their fur, pollinating as they go, which keeps the North Queensland landscape healthy and diverse.

Flying-foxes usually give birth to one baby at a time who is entirely dependent on its mother for several months. The long gestation and nursing periods allow for just one breeding season per year.

Townsville generally sees two of Australia's four flying-fox species.

Black flying-fox (*Pteropus Alecto*) are larger than little red flying-foxes and have very dark fur, often with a red 'mantle' around the back of the neck. They move with their colony between roost sites, but are mostly sedentary, returning to the same tree (or group of trees) each morning.

Diet: Fruit and blossoms

Birthing season: October-January

Little red flying-fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*) are much smaller than black flying-foxes and brown all over, often with rich red fur on the chest. This species of flying-fox is migratory, following the seasonal blooms along the Queensland coastline, and into western Queensland often sharing roosts with other species.

Diet: Almost exclusively blossoms

Birthing season: April-June

WHY ARE FLYING-FOXES A PROTECTED SPECIES?

Flying-foxes play a critical role in Australia's biodiversity and ecosystem. They are solely responsible for long-range seed dispersal and pollination of a large number of plant species. Flying-fox numbers have decreased across Australia due to widespread clearing and alteration of natural habitats. Rising temperatures have also contributed to the reduction in numbers, as flying-foxes struggle to survive temperatures over 40°C.

FLYING-FOX MANAGEMENT

Council undertake weekly monitoring of colonies in Council parklands, perform population counts and are proactive in planning for a predicted heatwave event to minimise impacts to the flying-fox population and the community.

Council undertakes nudging activities for flying-foxes on some local Council-managed land under a right of authority under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Council provides the Department of Environment and Science (DES) with monthly notifications on roost management activities which allow Council to keep the flying-foxes contained to one section of the land, allowing other areas to prosper and be enjoyed by our community and other wildlife.



Additional information about living with Flying-Foxes and managing their impacts on your property can be found on the DES website.

environment.des.qld.gov.au

CAN I GET SICK FROM FLYING-FOXES?

Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) can be caught from untreated bites or scratches from infected bats. However, less than 1% of the flying-fox population carry ABL and transmission is rare. Whilst they are cute, flying-foxes are wild animals and they do not like to be touched or handled. If you are accidentally injured, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, and see a doctor immediately for essential post-exposure treatment.

HAVE YOU SEEN THEM HANGING AROUND?

Flying-foxes are often attracted into suburban areas by the array of flowering and fruiting trees. Parks also have big shady trees where they feel safe from predators and the air is cool and moist. Much of the native habitat along Queensland's coastline where flying-foxes could once find food and shelter is now populated by our expanding cities. Less populated areas may be cleared for agriculture and prone to drought, leaving limited food sources and shelter.

Flying-foxes often travel from place to place depending on food availability, although you will find they return to previously visited feeding sites.

WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND AN INJURED FLYING-FOX?

If you find an injured, orphaned or sick flying-fox, please contact North Queensland Wildlife Care on 0414 717 374 and follow the instructions given.

Flying-foxes sometimes find themselves in precarious positions; caught on barbed wire, fruit tree netting or powerlines. An experienced carer provides the best chance for rescue, minimising the risk of further harming the bat (or rescuer).

Members of the public should refrain from touching flying-foxes at all times – instead place a towel or box over the bat to make it feel safe and protected while you wait for assistance. If it is a very hot day, try hosing the bat down very gently from a non-threatening distance, you might just save its life!

**TO REPORT SICK OR INJURED
FLYING-FOXES, PLEASE CALL
NQ WILDLIFE CARE - 0414 717 374**

CONTACT US

 13 48 10
 enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au
 townsville.qld.gov.au

TIPS FOR LIVING NEAR A FLYING-FOX ROOST

- Bring your washing in at night
- Park your car under shelter
- Keep doors and windows closed at dawn and dusk to reduce impacts during fly-in and fly-out
- Double glaze windows and insulate your house to minimise the noise experience
- Remove or cover fruit and flowers on fruiting and flowering trees on your property
- If you live on a large block, consider planting new trees further away from your home
- Move quietly near roost sites during the day, they make more noise when disturbed

**DID YOU
KNOW?
FLYING-FOXES
ARE THE
ONLY SPECIES
CAPABLE OF
POLLINATING
KEYSTONE
EUCALYPTUS
SPECIES
CRITICAL TO
THE SURVIVAL
OF THE KOALA.**