

COMMONWEALTH PARK FLYING-FOXES

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FABULOUS FLYING-FOXES

Flying-foxes play a vital role in ecosystem health and growth, they can travel up to 100 km in a single night, pollinating and dispersing the seeds of native trees. Numerous koala food trees are also pollinated by flying-foxes. Flying-foxes use their heightened sense of smell and excellent night vision to locate their food in the dark.

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BACKYARD BUFFET







Flying-foxes are attracted to urban areas because our parks and gardens provide a wide variety of food all year round. Human activities such as habitat clearing, and development reduce the availability of natural food sources from previously vegetated areas.

Flying-foxes will only visit your garden at night while trees are flowering or fruiting. They prefer the blossoms, fruit and nectar of native plants such as eucalypts, paperbarks and figs however sometimes find it necessary to eat cultivated fruits. Barbed wire and fruit tree netting can be deadly to flying-foxes, as they often get trapped.



Many native trees rely heavily on flying-foxes as pollinators.

FLYING-FOX FACTS

-  A flying-fox's wings are actually extra-long arms and fingers covered in a membrane of skin. Similar to human hands, flying-foxes have a thumb and four fingers which they stretch out when they flap their wings.
-  Flying-foxes are very clean animals; grooming themselves with their claws, thumb and tongue!
-  Flying-foxes have a very short digestive tract, with seeds passing through their gut in around 20 minutes. When they need to go to the toilet they hang right side up (invert) from their thumb claws to avoid soiling themselves.
-  Flying-foxes in urban areas are becoming more common due to destruction of natural habitat.
-  Female flying-foxes only have one pup each year.
-  The Aboriginal word for flying-fox is Nuddya.



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FLYING-FOXES AND HUMAN HEALTH

Although flying-foxes have potential to carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV) and Hendra virus, the occurrence and risk of transmission are very rare and public health risk is very low.

You cannot contract ABLV from being near a roost, or if they feed in your garden. Nor is it spread through their droppings. It can be avoided by not handling these animals. Pre- and post-exposure vaccinations are available if required.

People can only contact Hendra virus from coming into close contact with an infected horse and cannot catch the Hendra virus from flying-foxes.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE BEEN BITTEN OR SCRATCHED BY A FLYING-FOX?



Immediately wash (but do not scrub) the wound with soap and water for five minutes. Apply an antiviral such as Betadine and seek medical attention as soon as possible from your doctor or one of the ACT Health Walk-in Centres. If flying-fox saliva contacts the eyes, nose or mouth, the area should be flushed thoroughly with water and contact your doctor to determine whether post-exposure treatment is required.

If your dog or cat is bitten or scratched by a flying-fox please contact your veterinarian for advice.

Any bat found hanging alone within reach during the day needs care. If you find an injured or compromised bat during the day, **DO NOT TOUCH**, observe from a safe distance and call ACT Wildlife on 0432 300 033.

WARNING!



Fine nylon netting loosely hung over fruit trees entangles wildlife often causing fatal injuries.



We can thank flying-foxes for keeping our forests healthy, for use by us and by other animals like koalas.

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