


Relocation of Grey-headed Flying-foxes

from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney



In May 2010, the Botanic Gardens Trust received approval from the Federal Government to relocate the Grey-headed Flying-fox camp roosting at Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens. The proposed relocation was approved by the State Government in 2009.

Since the flying-foxes established a camp in the Gardens 20 years ago, their numbers have grown to over 22,000 at the summer seasonal peak.

The roosting habit of the flying-foxes has killed 26 mature trees, 20 palms and many understorey plants. Over 300 other trees and palms are currently being damaged, including rare, valuable and heritage species. Sixty are in a critical condition.


The relocation strategy

This June and July, when flying-fox numbers are at their seasonal low, intermittent noise will be used during the afternoon in the central areas of the Gardens with some early morning noise if necessary. The strategy is based on a successful Grey-headed Flying-fox relocation by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

The sound levels will have little impact on our neighbours. However, access to the centre of the Gardens in June and July may be limited.

Research and conservation of flying-foxes

The approved relocation plan is based on a long consultation process, taking into account scientific and animal welfare considerations. It includes the most extensive research project ever undertaken on this threatened species, which will contribute to conservation work to protect them.



For months, Trust staff and volunteers have been regularly conducting evening fly-out counts from the Gardens and from the other established flying-fox camps around Sydney. These counts will continue during and after the relocation to provide information on where the flying-foxes from the Royal Botanic Gardens have relocated.

Tagging and radio tracking of the flying-foxes will also provide essential information on their patterns of movement and help to manage the relocation.

Where will they go?

Based on noise disturbances used in Sydney in the 1990s, it is expected that the flying-foxes will relocate to existing camps. Other suitable habitats have been identified in national parks in the Sydney region, but they may establish camps in new areas. The Botanic Gardens Trust is committed to further relocation of the flying-foxes if they settle in existing sites already at capacity or establish new camps at unacceptable locations.

Health risks

The potentially fatal Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) is carried by a very small proportion of the flying-fox population and in rare incidences has been transmitted to humans via bites or scratches from disoriented flying-foxes. If you find one in distress, do not handle it. Call **WIRES 13 000 WIRES** or **1300 094 737** or **Sydney Wildlife 02 9413 4300**.

If you are bitten or scratched by any flying-fox species (alive or dead), immediately wash the affected area with soap and water for five minutes and contact your doctor for post-exposure inoculation for the Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL).

For further information

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