

We The People
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We the People 328 Bats without Borders



Good Day to you. It seems mankind is intent on destroying our magnificent planet and climate change caused by human activity is just another symptom. We don't value the very things that sustain life and then we're surprised by the environmental failures and species loss to our peril. This causes fractures in the self sustaining eco systems we rely on. Today I'm addressing a local environmental friend which is the much maligned and threatened species of Bat, the Flying Fox. These humble little creatures are very intelligent and form an important part of the eco system. In fact they are akin to the humble bee where their underbelly fur holds pollen acquired as they eat which is then transferred to the next tree when foraging. Without pollination new life is lost. This is where the Flying Fox is a very important part of the propagation of hardwood forests in Australia including bush land in suburbia. These Flying Foxes essentially feed on the nectar of the eucalyptus and palms and some other fruits. While consuming fruit, they spit the pulp and the seed out which falls to the ground unharmed to produce a new plant. Another species of Bats being the Micro Bat eat insects and help keep the lid on insect populations. It's all quite miraculous really.

Now the odd thing is that our little Bat friends are feared because of the Lyssavirus. I think the public believe people can catch this disease simply by being near the bat which is not true. In fact the chances of catching Lyssavirus are remote and the World Health Organisation define it as one of the rarest diseases in the world. It's an unjustified fear which betrays their significant value and then together with the Bats unique and stoic appearance have incurred the wrath of man. It's an ignorant unfounded fear.

Now we move to Robina where local vigilante groups are forming to remove or destroy a colony of Red Flying Foxes roosting in trees in Hampton Park. It's a pretty little park connected to a small island by a plank bridge and a great place to sit and think. Just a small local park for all to enjoy. Now the Red Flying Foxes have arrived, seasonally following the blossoming of the eucalyptus trees on the Gold Coast and I can assure you there is no smell and just their occasional raucous cry as they socialise. At dusk they leave and fly silently to forage and these muted masters of the air set about harmlessly doing their vital work. Now the vigilantes want them gone and some want them culled or killed or forced to move on. These people don't know what they are doing and their fear is unfounded. In fact as these are Red Flying Foxes they will move on especially when the weather turns cold in autumn and are rarely seen on the Gold Coast after March. Within a few weeks they will likely be gone but in the meantime the local Councillor, Herman Vorster, has already had 11 mature trees removed and now wants to chain saw more in order to move the Bats on. He has written to locals and asked them to participate in a survey regarding the Bat's future yet it appears he knows nothing of the Bat's habits or indeed their purpose. Cr Vorster has trees removed regularly but it appears seldom replaced with appropriate natives and some Council arborists have little to say in his favour.

Flying Foxes migrate up to 350 km's at times and relocate as food sources and the seasons change. In this they are expert pollinators, not just in one area but many. The '[Green Behind the Gold](#)' relies on them as most worthwhile itinerant gardeners. So it appears the Councillor is part of the problem not part of the proper solution, so let's hope he refers to science and not the outcome of his piteous survey. The key here is that these Bats roam and colonies shift and exchange roosting habitats. They aren't stopped by imaginary lines on a map so I call them [Bats without Borders](#) and they are worth knowing.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

My thanks to Ashley Fraser, Student of Bachelor of Science, Griffith University