

## Living with grey-headed flying-foxes

Some simple measures you can take to reduce conflict with flying-foxes.

Department of Planning and Environment



## More information

Information on flying-foxes:  
[environment.nsw.gov.au/Flying-foxes](https://environment.nsw.gov.au/Flying-foxes)



Information on flying-fox management:  
[environment.nsw.gov.au/Flying-fox-management](https://environment.nsw.gov.au/Flying-fox-management)

To find your local wildlife rescue organisation use the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) wildlife rescue app:  
[ifaw.org/au/resources/wildlife-rescue-app](https://ifaw.org/au/resources/wildlife-rescue-app)

For public health advice:  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

Photography, Cover: Grey-headed flying-fox (Matthew Mo); Page 3: Grey-headed flying-fox (Matthew Mo); Page 4: Grey-headed flying-fox (Matthew Mo).

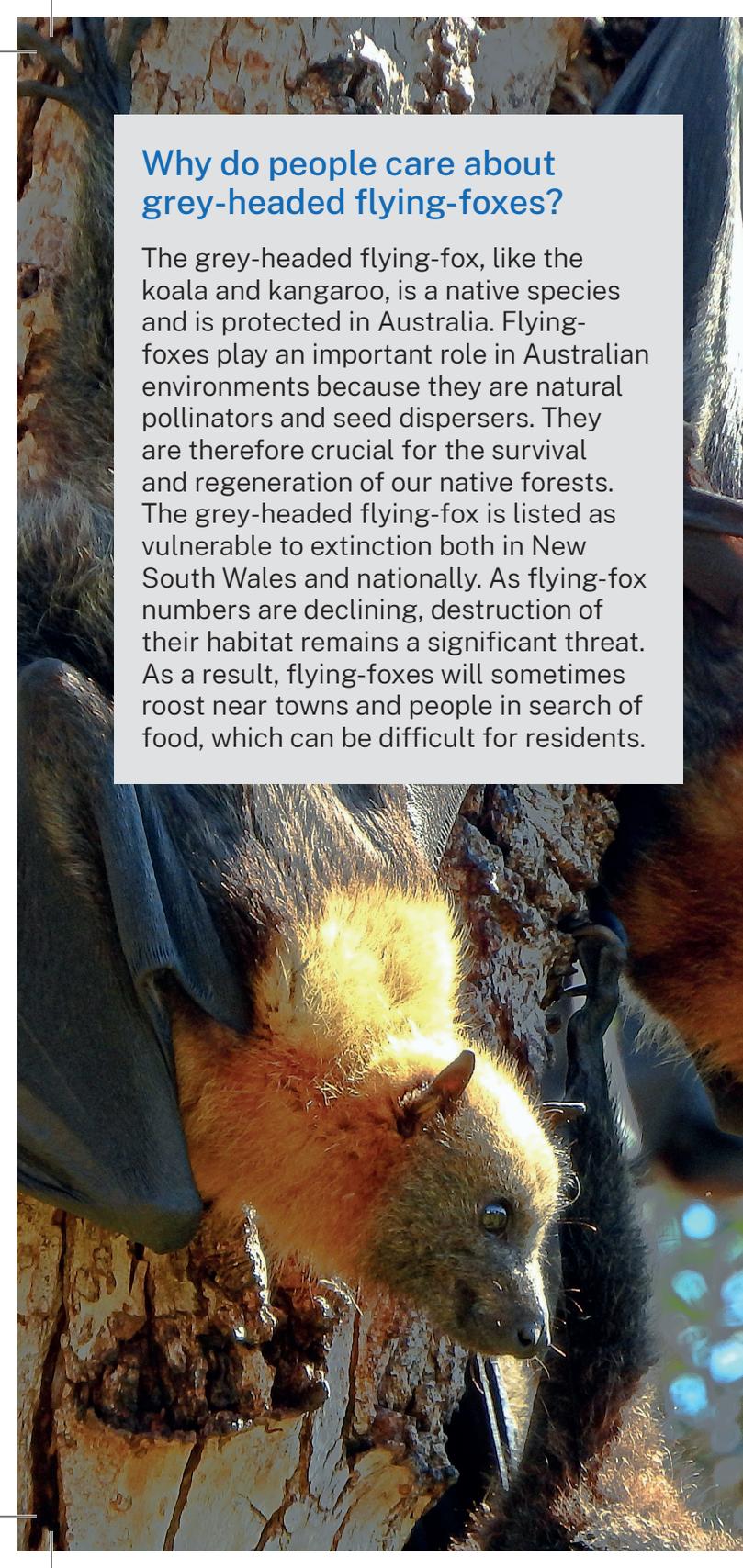
Published by: Environment and Heritage, Department of Planning and Environment. Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124; Phone: 1300 361 967; Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au); Website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au).

ISBN 978-1-922975-94-2; EHG 2023/0061; February 2023.

BD 3310

### Why do people care about grey-headed flying-foxes?

The grey-headed flying-fox, like the koala and kangaroo, is a native species and is protected in Australia. Flying-foxes play an important role in Australian environments because they are natural pollinators and seed dispersers. They are therefore crucial for the survival and regeneration of our native forests. The grey-headed flying-fox is listed as vulnerable to extinction both in New South Wales and nationally. As flying-fox numbers are declining, destruction of their habitat remains a significant threat. As a result, flying-foxes will sometimes roost near towns and people in search of food, which can be difficult for residents.



# Understanding flying-foxes

While the noise made by flying-foxes can be unpleasant at times, vocalisation is an important part of how they communicate. For example, mothers use a special call to locate their babies. Smell is also important for communication between flying-foxes. Like koalas, male flying-foxes use scent to attract females. Flying-fox droppings also play an important part in the dispersal of seeds for many native plant species.

## Flying-foxes and human health

Provided basic hygiene measures are taken, the risk of flying-foxes transmitting disease to humans is extremely low.

- **Australian bat lyssavirus** is only transmitted via the bite or scratch of an infected flying-fox. Therefore, it is very important that you never handle flying-foxes. Lyssavirus is not spread through droppings or urine, so you are not exposed to the virus if a flying-fox flies overhead, feeds or roosts in your garden, or if you live near a camp or visit one.
- **Hendra virus** is a disease that can be transmitted from infected flying-foxes to horses. There is no evidence that humans can contract Hendra virus directly from flying-foxes. All cases of human infection have been through transmission from infected horses. Therefore, caution should be exercised near sick horses.

## Can flying-foxes be relocated?

There are often calls to relocate flying-foxes. However, previous attempts have been found to be mostly unsuccessful, with flying-foxes returning or even forming new camps in more locations. Attempting to disturb flying-foxes is likely to make flying-foxes even noisier for you and your neighbours.

### What can you do?

- Don't disturb flying-foxes. They are quietest when left alone.
- Planting low vegetation around your property can provide distance between your house and flying-foxes.
- Consider property modification options. For example, double-glazing of windows has been shown to reduce noise inside buildings.
- Where possible, keep vehicles under cover, and take washing off the clothesline before sunset to protect from droppings.
- To protect backyard fruit trees, use fine-meshed netting that you can't poke a finger through, and keep it taut to prevent wildlife from getting entangled.
- Keep animal food and water dishes away from trees used by flying-foxes.
- Consider vaccinating horses against Hendra virus.



## What to do if you find an injured or dead flying-fox

Contact your local wildlife rescue organisation. Don't attempt to rescue it yourself and never directly handle flying-foxes.

If you must dispose of a dead flying-fox, use a shovel or similar tool to avoid direct contact with the animal. As an added precaution, always wear thick gloves, such as gardening gloves, and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

## What to do if you are bitten or scratched by a flying-fox

Wash the wound immediately with plenty of soap and water and seek medical attention straight away.

Report the incident to NSW Health.