



# REPORT

Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma  
Centre

6 September 2019



<b>Report name</b>	Report on the Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre
<b>Submitted to</b>	Queensland Department of Environment & Science RSPCA Biosecurity
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2018, 238 flying-foxes were removed from the Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre (ABCWTC) in very poor health. Flying-fox carers from other South-east Queensland bat groups spent the subsequent months attempting to rehabilitate these animals for release. Only 25% were able to be rehabilitated and released to the wild.

ABBBS banding records show that 40% of these animals had been banded on the premises between 2009 and 2016. Their histories reveal a disturbing picture of animal neglect, cruelty and extensive, prolonged animal hoarding.

This document will present abundant evidence of:

- a large number of animals requiring euthanasia for chronic, advanced conditions acquired from poor husbandry and inadequate care;
- animals neglected and suffering for years without veterinary attention for treatable conditions;
- healthy hand-raised orphans being sent to ABCWTC for release, and instead held captive for years until crippled by conditions acquired in care and no longer releasable;
- ongoing, active acquisition of more animals to add to the large numbers held at the facility;
- evidence of large-scale animal acquisitions despite guidelines against such removal of animals from colonies;
- clear evidence of animal hoarding on a large scale as per the currently documented key indicators;
- false reporting to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Association.

These findings demonstrate a thorough violation of the *Code of Practice—Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (Nature Protection Act, 1992) and evidence of the general animal offences of "breach of duty of care" and "animal cruelty" as prohibited by *The Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* by the former owner/operator of the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre, Patricia Wimberley.

This report also includes the impact on organisations and individual carers involved in managing the animals removed from ABCWTC in August 2018. Their personal accounts detail the reality of what was a very disturbing and confronting rescue effort, never before experienced in the history of flying-fox rehabilitation in Australia.



## Introduction

In August 2018 the Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre (the ABCWTC) ceased operations by order of the Queensland Department of the Environment and Science (DES) following a number of letters of complaint submitted in April regarding severe animal welfare problems on the site (Appendix 2, 3 & 4).

Over 200 flying-foxes were resident at the ABCWTC at the time of its closure. To facilitate their removal and care, it was decided to band them for identification under the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS). An ABBBS A-class bander, Dr Kerry Parry-Jones and one of her R-class banders, Mandi Griffith began this process at the ABCWTC on 7th August 2018 (Parry-Jones, Appendix 1).

Over the following days, 238 flying-foxes were removed from the ABCWTC under the direction of Mandi Griffith. Three experienced flying-fox carers from Bat Rescue Inc, Carmel Givens, Charmaine Brayley and Sue Morris, were asked to assist with this process on August 8th and 9th. Animals were weighed, measured, inspected and allocated to carers. Those without ABBBS bands were banded on-site by Mandi Griffith. These details, including band numbers and cursory triage notes on their condition, were recorded in a ledger.

The condition of the flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC was overwhelmingly poor. Nearly all had wing membrane infections ("slimy wing"), many with advanced, long-term infections that had progressed to shrunken, scarred wing tissue, some with ruptured joints and exposed bone. Some were missing wings. Many had infected and necrotic ear tips, were underweight, had poor fur condition and demonstrated pain responses on handling.

Over 40% of these animals required early euthanasia for painful deformity beyond repair; the remainder underwent 2 to 6 months of rehabilitation before being considered for release. Only 25% were eventually able to be released.

This document will provide a report on the condition of flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC, and what has been discovered of their histories by research into their ABBBS banding records. There has been ongoing concern about animal welfare at the ABCWTC for over 15 years, but the reality of the animal suffering inflicted at this establishment is more disturbing than could have been imagined. This report will also examine the systemic failures that allowed this level of animal neglect and cruelty to occur and make urgent recommendations to prevent recurrence.

## Flying-foxes at the ABCWTC in August 2018

238 flying-foxes were removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018:

- 74 Grey-headed Flying-foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) a species which is considered vulnerable under State and Commonwealth jurisdiction,
- 112 Black Flying-foxes (*P. alecto*), and
- 52 Little Red Flying-foxes (*P. scapulatus*).

A year later (August 2019) some animals are still reported as being in care, but the fates of most of the ABCWTC bats have been determined. Their fates are given in Fig. 1. Most of the animals kept in care for an extended period are females who were pregnant at the time of removal who were allowed to give birth and raise their babies before their fate was determined.

Both the Grey-headed Flying-foxes and the Little Red Flying-foxes had euthanasia rates of 42% and 48% respectively, however the Black Flying-foxes had a much higher euthanasia rate (67%). There are two factors affecting these results:

- One-third of the Grey-headed Flying-foxes comprised a collection of breeding females (described as "education bats") who were pregnant and allowed time to raise their babies, despite many having the same chronic wing conditions that qualified other animals for early euthanasia. If one compares the percentage of animals able to be rehabilitated and released, the results are comparable (GHFF 20%, BFF 17%).
- A larger percentage of the euthanased Black Flying-foxes can be shown to have been at the ABCWTC for many years. Only 3 of the 52 Little Red Flying-foxes had been previously banded, whereas over half the Blacks and Greys had been previously banded between 2009 and 2016.

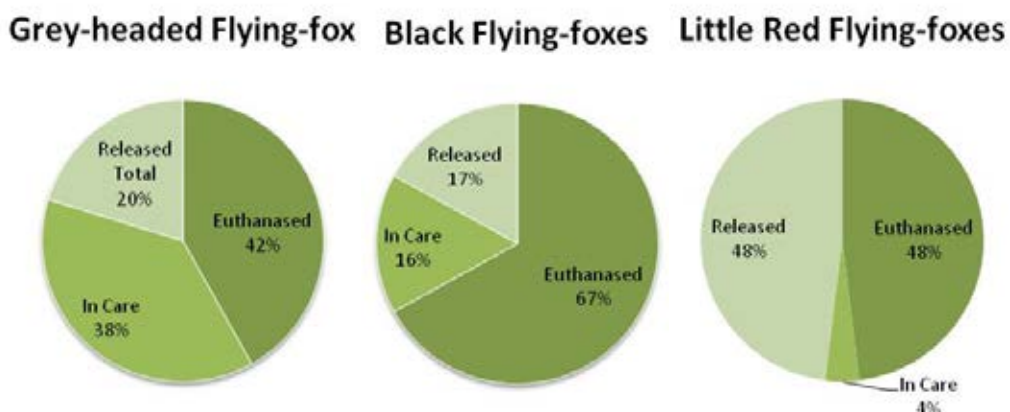


Figure 1: The fates of the three species of flying-foxes from the ABCWTC (Parry-Jones, Appendix 1)

Of the 238 flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018, ABBBS banding records show a total of 97 flying-foxes had been banded prior to 2018. In some cases the banding dated back to 2009. Most had been in care for at least 2.5 to 3 years. Only 141 were unbanded in 2018. (Fig. 2).

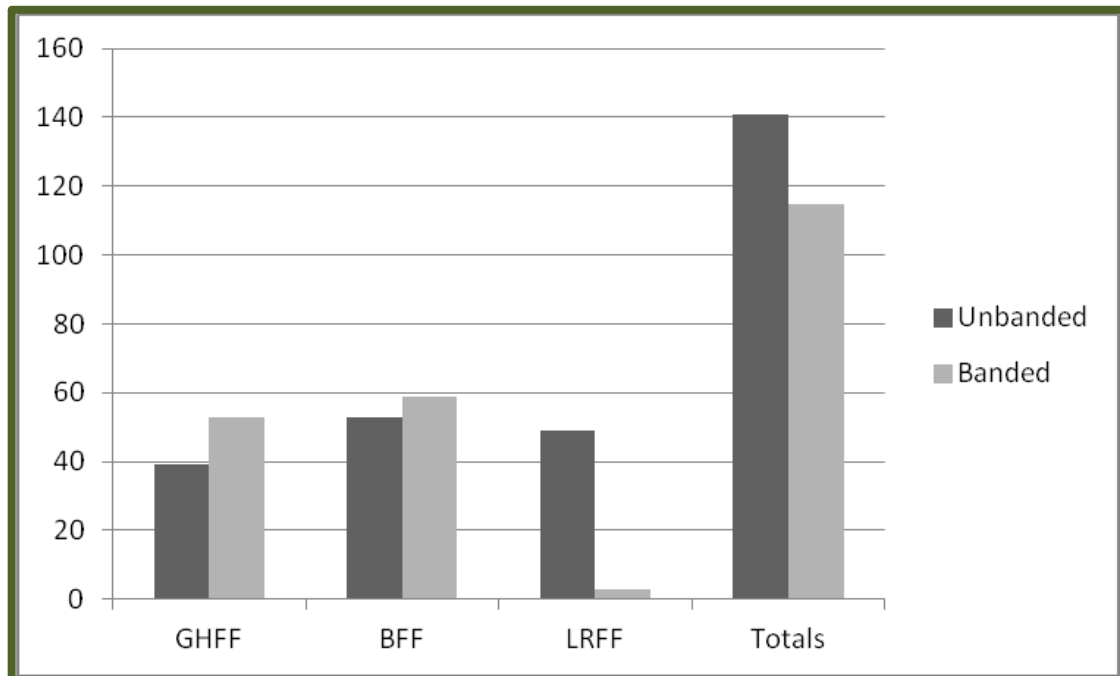
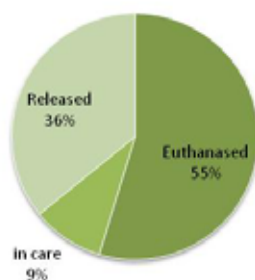


Figure 2: The number of flying-foxes at the ABCWTC divided into those that were already banded and those that were not by 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018. (Parry-Jones, Appendix 1)

The banded and unbanded cohorts of flying-foxes showed different health pictures and this was particularly noticeable with regard to the Black Flying-foxes. None of the Black Flying-foxes known to have been at the ABCWTC for 2.5 years or more (banded before 2018) were able to be rehabilitated and released.

#### Unbanded Black Flying-foxes



#### Banded Black Flying-foxes

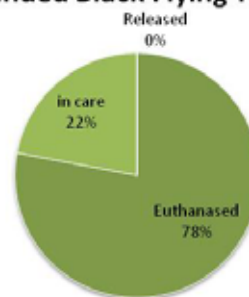


Figure 3: Differences in Fates between Unbanded and Banded Black Flying-foxes (Parry-Jones, Appendix 1)



**Table 1. Summary of Flying-foxes Removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018.**

SPECIES	Euthanased	In Care	Released	Total
<b>Black Flying-fox</b> (banded pre-2018)	46	13	0	59
<b>Black Flying-fox</b> (banded 2018)	29	5	19	53
<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b> (banded pre-2018)	10	18	7	35
<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b> (banded 2018)	21	10	8	29
<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b> (banded pre-2018)	2	1	0	3
<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b> (banded 2018)	23	1	25	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131 (55%)</b>	<b>48 (20%)</b>	<b>59 (25%)</b>	<b>238</b>

The data in Table 1 summarises the outcomes of animals removed from ABCWTC in August 2018, by species and banding era. Those banded pre-2018 have significantly poorer outcomes compared to those banded in 2018 indicating the longer in care at ABCWTC, the lower the probability of release.

A Chi-squared test for the statistical independence of two variables in this case outcome and banding era, indicates that outcome is dependent on time in care ( $P < 0.0001$ ).

When the 2018-banded ABCWTC outcomes were compared to outcomes from Bat Rescue in the same fiscal year 2018 for all rehabilitation flying-foxes, again the outcomes are significantly different ( $P < 0.005$ ). Bat Rescue had a release rate nearly 20% higher than the ABCWTC release rate in the same year.

## Conditions Seen in Flying-foxes Removed from the ABCWTC

The overall condition of the flying-foxes of all species removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018 was very poor. Nearly all suffered from some combination of malnutrition, infected, damaged ears, and chronic wing membrane infections, some of which had degenerated into bone and joint deformities.

### 1. Wing Membrane Infection

Wing membrane infections are rare in wild flying-foxes, but are more commonly seen in care, particularly when conditions are crowded, husbandry is poor or when animals suffer poor general health and weak immunity. Infections are generally opportunistic and may be bacterial or fungal, or both, and require microscopy to accurately diagnose. Various names are used: "slimy wing", "wing fungus", "fungus". Treatments vary between practitioners; two or three applications of a topical combined antibacterial/antifungal wash (diluted Malaseb 1: 30) are usually successful, with more difficult/persistent cases requiring topical or systemic antibiotics.

Good husbandry contributes to prevention with regards to animal density, ventilation, cleanliness, nutrition and exposure to sunlight. Flying-foxes require space to groom, flap and expose their wings daily to direct sunlight, particularly the underside where infections most commonly begin. Cleanliness, particularly of bedding and drapes, reduces proliferation of environmental flora. Adequate nutrition is important for maintenance of skin integrity, particularly proteins, lipids and calcium.

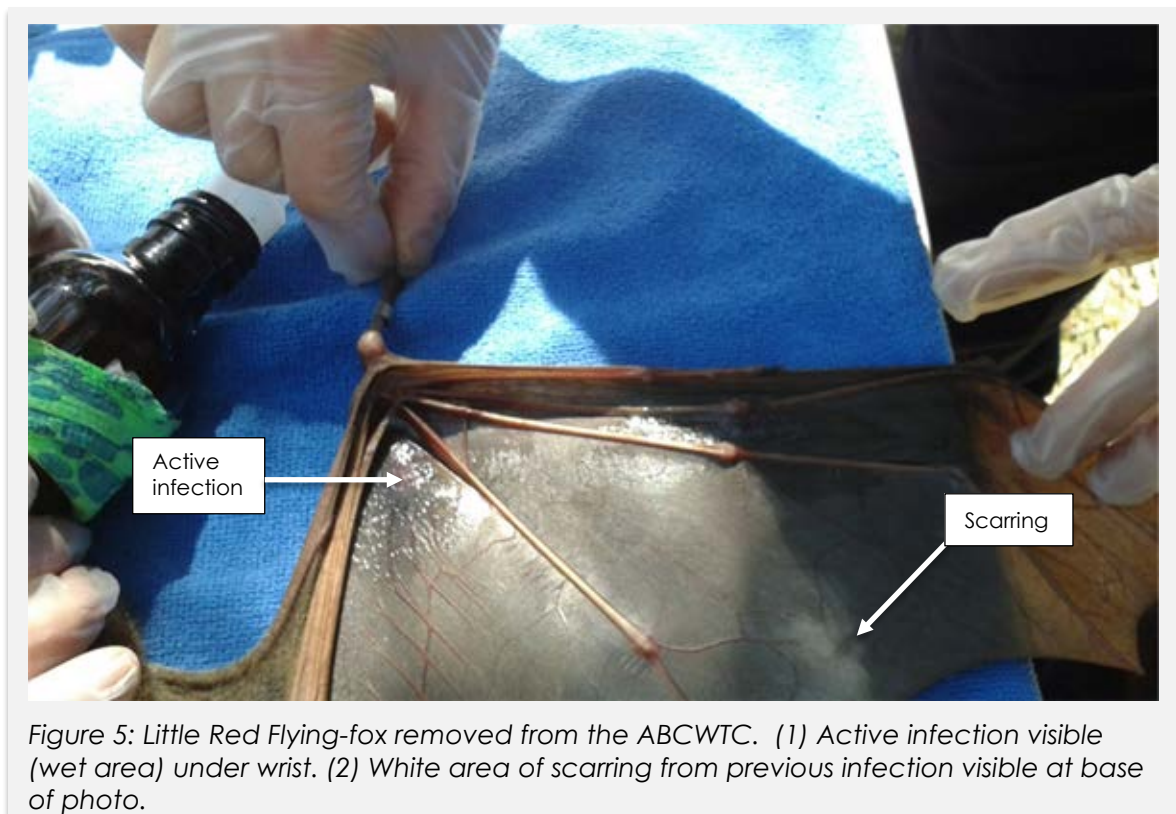
Wing membrane infections that have been allowed to progress long-term to the extent seen in the flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC were beyond the realm of experience of most veterinary professionals and wildlife carers who encountered them. For reference, Figure 4 shows the appearance of a healthy flying-fox wing:



Figure 4: Healthy Flying-fox wing (Black Flying-fox)



"Slimy wing" is usually first observed as a shiny, wet patch of wing membrane, usually in a folding area under a joint, which then takes on a grey or whitish appearance as the infection progresses to cause to epithelial (skin surface layer) breakdown and production of exudate (leakage of serum and white blood cells). Fig. 5 (1). Normally, at or before this point, the infection is recognised and treated. Prolonged infection leads to whitened, opaque areas of superficial scarring. Fig. 5 (2).



In the flying-foxes from ABCWTC, infection that is usually arrested while only affecting the surface of the skin had progressed deeper. Bats suffering chronic "slimy wing" had large areas of surface scarring, showing that damage had extended deep into the dermis. Skin elasticity was lost, leaving the membrane with a plastic texture and pale, shiny appearance, with significant loss of volume. Fig 6. These animals demonstrated marked signs of extreme pain on handling: vocalisation, trembling, attempts to bite and withdrawal on touch.



Figure 6: Chronic membrane infection in Black Flying-fox from the ABCWTC, showing: "plastic" appearance of membrane, patches of active infection (raw areas), membrane shrinkage (shortened span between fingers 3 and 4, where held; 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> fingertips bent inwards by shrunken membrane).



In some, membrane shrinkage on the interior wing surface near joints led to the formation of "pockets" as fingertips were pulled inwards. Fig 7.



Figure 7: "Pocket" formed by contraction of membrane around distal joint of 5<sup>th</sup> finger in Black Flying-fox removed from the ABCWTC.

In the worst affected animals, including some documented as having had "slimy wing" at least two or three years earlier, this membrane stiffness and shrinkage had led to pronounced deformity of bones and joints. Some individuals' finger joints were acutely contracted, giving rise to swollen joints, skin rupture, and eventually joint rupture. Figs. 8 and 9.

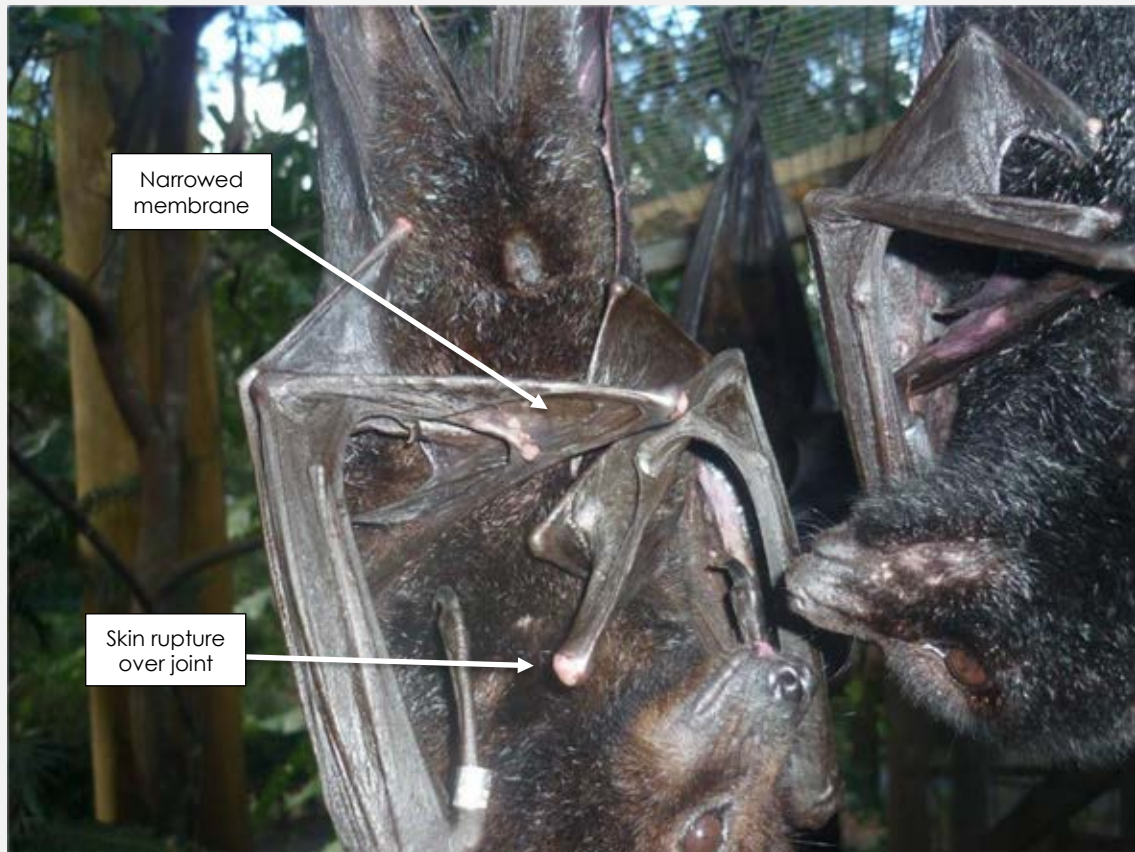


Figure 8: Black Flying-foxes at the ABCWTC showing extreme narrowing of membrane between fingers, permanently contracted joints, and rupture of skin over joint (pink areas).

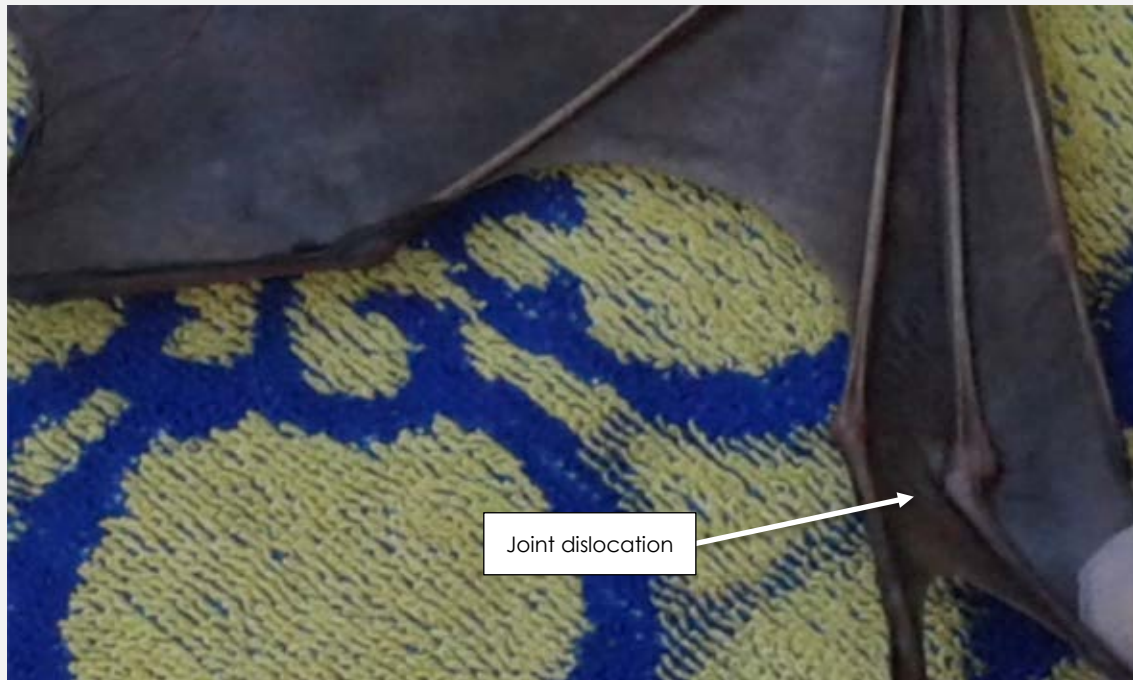


Figure 9: Black Flying-fox at the ABCWTC showing contracted membrane on right wing and rupture of distal joint on right 3<sup>rd</sup> finger.





Membrane loss due to shrinkage led to some animals having 2cm or less of stiff, inelastic membrane separating their 3rd and 4th fingertips (~80% loss). Some animals had 1cm or more of bare fingertip bone protruding from the edge of wing membrane. In some, the contraction of membrane had led to fractures and dislocations. Fig. 10.



*Figure 10: Little Red Flying-fox removed from the ABCWTC showing extreme narrowing of membrane between finger bones and joint dislocation from contracted membrane.*

Despite the long-standing nature of these animals' infections, those who weren't euthanased early on humane grounds responded well to treatment, with most responding to 2 or 3 topical applications of Malaseb. However, once the infection was resolved, those with severe scarring were still left with rigid, inflexible membrane and bone/joint deformities.

Less severe cases, without significant scarring, or those with just some membrane stiffness did eventually regain elasticity and were able to fly (eg, "Phillip", Fig 11 & 12, below). Unfortunately, they were in the minority (~20%).



Figure 11: Black Flying-fox "Phillip" (ABBBS#7386597). Persistent membrane infection 33 days after removal from the ABCWTC.



Figure 12: Black Flying-fox "Phillip" (ABBBS #7386597). Healed, elastic membrane 64 days after removal from the ABCWTC. Released in December 2018.

## 2. Infected and Necrotic Ear Tips

Many flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC had severely infected ear tips with necrotic areas (dead tissue). Fig. 13. Some showed signs of previous healed infections, with pinnae reduced to shortened stubs (eg see Fig. 15).



Figure 13: Black Flying-fox "Victor" (ABBBS #7386578). Necrotic, infected ear tips. Day 1 after removal from the ABCWTC.

Infected ears responded to a topical daily application of an antibacterial, antifungal and anti-inflammatory preparation (Dermotic). Any necrotic areas were lost. Fig. 14 shows Victor's ears after recovery.



Figure 14: Black Flying-fox "Victor" (ABBBS #7386578). Healed ear tips. Day 64 after removal from the ABCWTC.





Figure 15: Black Flying-fox "Phillip" (ABBBS #7386597). Half of left ear missing on removal from the ABCWTC.

For reference, Figure 16 shows healthy, intact Black Flying-fox ears.



Figure 16: Healthy flying-fox ears.

### 3. Malnutrition

Signs of malnutrition were common in the flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC, with animals showing fur loss, thinning fur, dry, flaking skin and fur pigment loss. Fig. 17 and 18. These conditions were also documented by Dr Parry-Jones in 2015-16. Many animals were not only underweight, but undersized, with many 2+ year old animals having the appearance of juveniles or sub-adults. Protein deficiency is known to depress growth in young Pteropid bats (Vogelnest & Woods, 493).



*Figure 17: Chest of adult female Little Red Flying-fox (ABBBS #6312758) removed from the ABCWTC, showing emaciation (protruding sternum), fur loss, fur de-pigmentation, dry skin and dehydration (poor skin turgor). Weight 356gm.*

Inadequate feeding of flying-foxes and lack of protein supplementation at ABCWTC were documented in previous complaints submitted to DES and RSPCA in April 2018 (Appendix 2 & 3).

Malnutrition was simply corrected over time with a standard captive flying-fox diet of fresh fruit with high protein supplement (Wombaroo). Figures 18 to 21 show Black Flying-foxes Roger and Abby on removal from ABCWTC and their improvement after 2 months of standard captive flying-fox diet.





Figure 18: Black Flying-fox "Roger" (ABBBS #7386574). Day 15 after removal from ABCWTC, showing poor membrane texture and flaking skin on left wing.



Figure 19: Black Flying-fox "Roger" (ABBBS #7386574). Day 64 after removal from ABCWTC, after 2 months on regular captive diet of fruit with high protein supplement – skin smooth, wings and fur glossy.



Figure 20: Black Flying-fox "Abby" (ABBBS #7386558). Day 1 after removal from the ABCWTC, showing rough skin, coarse thinning fur, pigment loss. Forearm 155mm, weight 471g (79g underweight, 14%). Pregnant. (Also shows inflamed, shortened ear tips).



Figure 21: Black Flying-fox "Abby" (ABBBS #7386558) with newborn baby girl.

Day 69 after removal from the ABCWTC and on regular captive flying-fox diet of fruit and high protein supplement. Skin smooth, nose and wing membrane shiny, fur thicker, soft and black.

## CASE STUDIES

### Little Red Flying-foxes Removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018

This section provides specific details on the 28 adult Little Red Flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC and taken into care by Bat Rescue Inc. Photographs and case notes are included, with references to specific injuries and conditions present on removal from ABCWTC. A summary of the case studies is then provided which demonstrates clear evidence of:

- untreated injuries;
- chronic conditions gained in care, also untreated;
- malnutrition;
- animals not provided euthanasia for painful, unviable conditions.

For reference, Figure 22 shows a healthy Little Red Flying-fox wing:

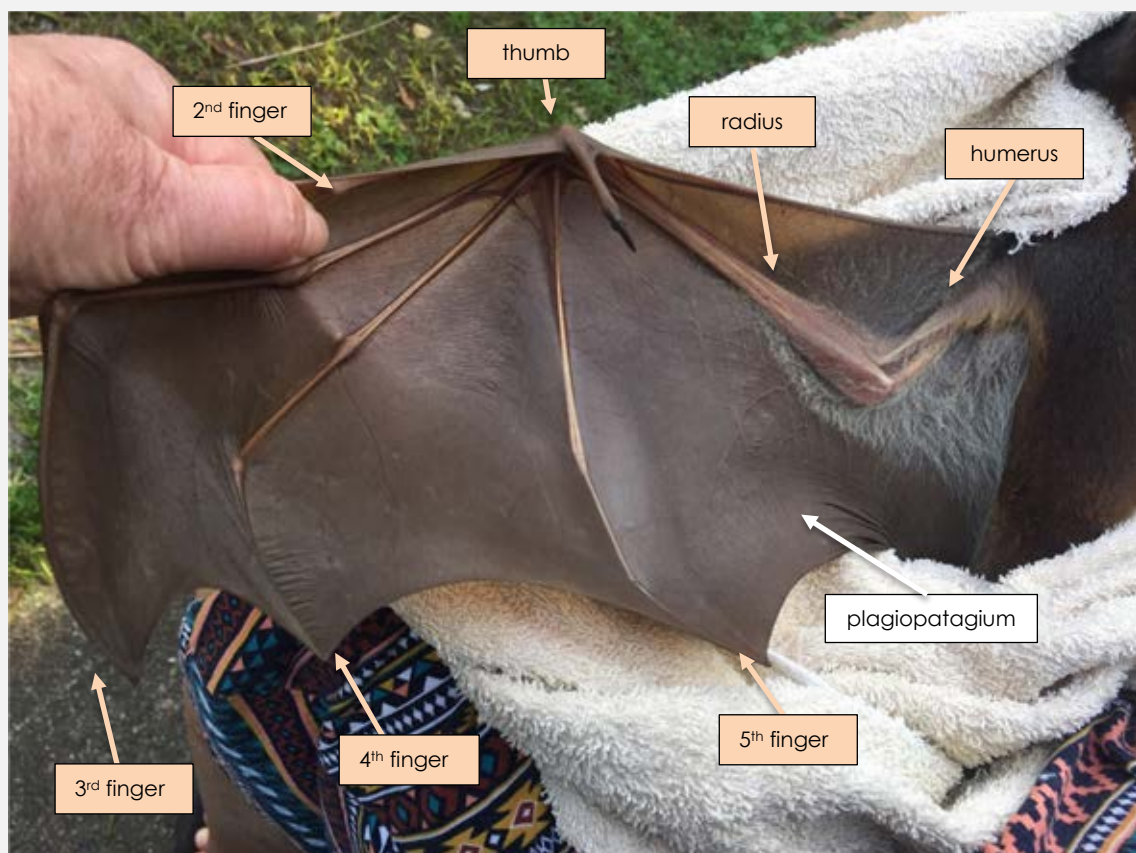


Figure 22: Healthy Little Red Flying-fox wing.



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312710
<b>Banding date</b>	19 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>30 months
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Non-flyer. Wing tip pocket.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. (L) finger 3 and 4 fused at 2 <sup>nd</sup> knuckle – all distal phalanges are missing. (R)wing – major constriction & compromised extension of wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



Left Wing



Right Wing

*Notes: Significant deterioration since 2016. Dislocated joints. Shortened thumb claw not functional; abrasion at base of thumb suggests he was using entire thumb to move.*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6327551
<b>Banding date</b>	10 August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	(R)wing trailing edge gone, 50% membrane deficit. Finger 5/p 1&2 gone, F4/p2 almost 180° constriction. Ears granulated and eroded. Slimy wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Left Wing*



*Right Wing*

*Notes: Left 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> finger joints swollen and displaced. Exposed bone. Multiple painful conditions.*



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Nina"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312769
<b>Banding date</b>	10 August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing (L) wing. Old fractures to digits with fused bones and severe constriction.		
	Unreleasable. Has baby.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased October 2018 after baby released.		



*Right Wing*



*Right Wing*

*Notes: Extreme loss of wing membrane and deformity. This bat would have struggled to carry a baby.*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312727
<b>Banding date</b>	August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Fungal both wings. (R)wing exposed finger bone. Massive untreated fracture of (R) humerus – cannot extend wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Old untreated fracture of (R) humerus*



*Notes: It is unethical and illegal to allow an animal to suffer such a fracture untreated.*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312738
<b>Banding date</b>	10 August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Fractured upper canines Gingivitis, abscess and fractured lower left canine. X-ray: abscess through to sinus cavity with extreme bone loss. (R) wing – F4 old badly healed fracture and constriction.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



Right Wing

Notes: This flying-fox was likely a barbed-wire entanglement. The abscess is possibly the result of a ruptured palate (commonly seen in barbed-wire entanglements), which is untreatable and usually grounds for euthanasia. From the healed injuries and extent of the abscess it would seem to have been in care for some time. This animal would have suffered significantly for that duration.



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312756
<b>Banding date</b>	10 August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. Massive membrane loss both wings.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Left Wing*



*Right Wing*

*Notes: Membrane contracted between fingers 3 and 4. Dislocation of the first joint finger on finger 3 on both wings.*



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Aretha"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312770
<b>Banding date</b>	10 August 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing on (L) wing. Mild constriction of both wings. Poor body condition. Has baby.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released 1 Nov 2018.		



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312751
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Missing P1 and P2 of right 5 <sup>th</sup> digit. Wing contracted.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		




*Right Wing*

*Notes: This membrane loss appears to be the result of an injury rather than contraction from chronic slimy wing. However, the animal's body condition is worth noting; it is severely underweight, has poor fur with pigment loss and muscle wasting. Forearm 150mm, Weight 371g (129g underweight, 25%).*



Little Red Flying-fox	Female	ABBBS number	6312758
Banding date	10 Aug 2018	Time at ABCWTC	Unknown
Aug 2018 Assessment	Severe emaciation and dehydration. Hair loss front and back. (L) and (R) wing constriction. Ears granulated and weeping.		
Outcome	Euthanased		



*Chest: extreme emaciation, dehydration and hair loss*



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312730
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Finger 5 exposed bone. Granulating tissue and membrane constriction. Slimy wing healing but scarring – no elasticity. No teeth.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Right Wing*



*Right wing (detail)*

*Notes: Healed tear in plagiopatagium suggests membrane loss is from injury. It has led to deformity of adjacent bones and joints, which would be painful.*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312744
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Both wings suffering from slimy wing. (R)wing – finger 3 and 4 distal phalanges missing. F5 phalanx missing also. Massive constriction.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Right Wing*



*Notes: This animal has been in care for quite some time based on the amount of membrane regrowth and degree of deformity.*



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Liz"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312763
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	(L) wing severe constriction finger 5 Canines chipped. Has female baby.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased 23 Oct 2018 after baby released.		



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312752
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing both wings. (L) wing – massive membrane deficit and finger bone loss.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



Notes: Clearly non-viable, old injuries.





Little Red Flying-fox	Female	ABBBS number	6312733
Banding date	10 Aug 2018	Time at ABCWTC	Unknown
Aug 2018 Assessment	(R) finger 5 exposed bone. Good teeth. Baby boy died.		
Outcome	Euthanased		





<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male "Blondie"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312764
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. (R) wing. Badly healed fracture. Finger 2/p2 deformed.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Notes: It is unethical and illegal to allow an animal to suffer such a fracture untreated.*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male "Aragon"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312728
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Severe contraction of (L) wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



Left Wing



Notes: This membrane loss is possibly from an injury (eg barbed wire). Of note is the amount of time this unviable animal was kept in care, which can be seen by the amount of membrane healing that has occurred following bone loss. The curving of the finger bones caused by membrane contraction would be very painful.





<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312766
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. 50% of plagiopatagium gone. Massive membrane and finger bone loss – both wings. Severe dehydration, emaciated.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		



*Right Wing*

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312767
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. (R) wing – all distal phalanges gone. Gross fusing of distal bone surfaces. Underweight. Black teeth.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased.		



*Right Wing*



The remaining Little Red Flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC do not have photographs.

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312754
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Extremely underweight and dehydrated. Slimy wing (R) wing. Extensive scarring. F3f/pl will require surgery. F/p2 Exposed bone.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male "Louis"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312755
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. Knuckle abrasions both wings. Erythematous and exudative discharge both ears.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released 1 Nov 2018.		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312759
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing with massive resultant scarring and extreme loss of elasticity. Wing extension very badly compromised, about 75% (L) wing F4/pl. (R) wing F3 deformed joints and bones.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Thumbalina"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	No band (no thumb)
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	(R) thumb missing. Open wound. (L) thumb hook damaged. Small wound on nose. Worn teeth.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released 1 Nov 2018		





<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Ella"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312790
<b>Banding date</b>	20 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>30 months
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. Massive membrane and finger bone loss on both wings.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased Oct 2018 after baby released.		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Billie"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312731
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy both wings. No other apparent injuries. Severe scarring from slimy wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased 23 Oct 2018 (non-flyer).		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312740
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. (R) wing – Finger 3/pl granuloma. Will need surgery. Good teeth. Exposed bone (R) wing contracted.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released Nov 2018.		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Madeline"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312764
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing, both wings. Shocking already healed wing injuries. Missing digits right wing. Membrane loss. Has baby.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased after baby released 23 Oct 2018.		

<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Angelique"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312789
<b>Banding date</b>	20 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>2 years 6 months
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing – both. Cleared by assessment on 13 <sup>th</sup> . Poor body condition but no gross injuries. Why was this animal in care? Minor abrasions to (R) wing and finger 3 joint.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released 1 Nov 2018.		



<b>Little Red Flying-fox</b>	Female "Lena"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	6312768
<b>Banding date</b>	10 Aug 2018	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Slimy wing. Still a bit of slimy wing after 5 days. Releasable?		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released 1 Nov 2018.		

## Discussion

The Little Red Flying-foxes had the lowest reported morbidity and mortality of the animals removed from the ABCWTC; nearly half were recorded as being released, unlike the Black and Grey-Headed Flying-foxes (release rates of 17% and 20%, respectively).

These case studies demonstrate several important failures in the care delivered at the ABCWTC.

### ***Animals denied treatment of disease or injury***

These cases also provide clear evidence of untreated, long-standing painful conditions:

- three untreated fractures;
- a tooth/palate abscess; and
- the ubiquitous "slimy wing", progressed to membrane contraction, exposed bone and dislocations.

### ***Animals denied timely euthanasia for painful, untreated conditions***

Many of the bats shown here had either come into care with extensive injuries that made them unviable for release, gained such injuries in care, or deteriorated to the point of unviability from untreated conditions gained whilst in care. All of these meet the criteria for euthanasia on humane grounds.

### ***Deterioration of condition over long-term captivity***

The first Little Red Flying-fox shown (page 21), male (ABBBS # 6312710) showed a marked deterioration in his condition over time. In February 2016 Dr Parry-Jones recorded that he had a "wing pocket" (contracted membrane around a finger joint) and by August 2018 he had missing finger bones, fused bones and pronounced wing deformity.

Likewise, Little Red Flying-fox female "Ella" (ABBBS # 6312790) was recorded as "missing half a wing" in 2016. By 2018 she had "massive membrane and finger bone loss on both wings" and "slimy wing" She was also carrying a baby.



### ***Animals with painful injuries and deformities allowed to mate and breed***

All the Little Red Flying-fox females carrying babies had active wing membrane infections and some had significant wing digit/membrane loss and deformity. Letting females in such conditions breed is irresponsible and cruel. The physical act of mating would be painful, then after giving birth they would struggle to handle babies with deformed wings, missing digits and painful, inflamed wing membrane. One phenomenon observed at the ABCWTC was that Little Red Flying-fox mothers were dropping their babies. (Roberts, Appendix 3). The deformities and injuries seen here would offer some explanation, along with the effect that poor nutritional status would have on their lactation and the health of their offspring.

Subsequent case history discussion will be made in reference to the history of animals as provided by ABBBS banding records.





## **Animal Histories Obtained through Data Matching of ABBBS Records**

The following section reports the history of the flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC in August 2018 obtained by data matching of their 2018 records and historical ABBBS records.

Data sources include:

- ABBBS historical records from Dr Kerry Parry-Jones;
- animal health records in the online record system used by Bat Rescue Inc;
- Bat Conservation and Rescue Queensland's animal records database.

Earlier ABBBS records were made by Dr Parry-Jones during a number of visits to the ABCWTC between 2009 and 2016, in which she assessed and banded many of the flying-foxes on the premises, and records submitted by the R-class banders licensed under her.

### **ABBBS Bandings at the ABCWTC Prior to 2018**

This is documented in more detail in Dr Parry-Jones' *Report on Bats from the Australian Bat Clinic in 2018* (Appendix 1).

In February 2009 Dr Kerry Parry-Jones visited the ABCWTC to train the proprietor, Trish Wimberley, to band flying-foxes under the ABBBS, to facilitate record keeping and enable data collection on their release. 71 of the approximately 500 flying-foxes on the premises were banded for immediate release. A release date for these animals was not given for over a year and eventually they were reported as being released in April 2010.

In 2011 three additional volunteers at ABCWTC were also trained as R-class banders to help deal with the large number of flying-foxes on the premises and achieve some sort of "flow-through" to release. Records were submitted until 2012 when the other banders stopped volunteering at the ABCWTC. Over 2013 and 2014 only 28 records were submitted to ABBBS from ABCWTC, despite the proprietor requesting hundreds of ABBBS bands a year.

In July 2015 Dr Parry-Jones visited ABCWTC to assess the situation. Over 4 days she banded and assessed 279 flying-foxes (approximately three-quarters of the animals on the premises). A significant number were found to have wing infections ("slimy wing") and she noted that these and others required veterinary attention. During this visit she attempted to orchestrate the release of 120 healthy, flying juveniles/sub-adults (the last season's babies who should have been released months earlier).

On her return visit in February 2016 Dr Parry-Jones found the situation at ABCWTC even more chaotic, with an estimated 700 flying-foxes in captivity. She was able to



assess half of these (353) and banded those without bands. Not all the animals assessed received individual health notes, but 66 (19%) were specifically documented as having wing infections (variously recorded as "slimy wing" or "fungus"). Most disturbingly, she found 29 of the 120 juveniles meant to be released in 2015, scattered in various cages on the property. Only one-third of them (9) could still fly. The rest had wing membrane infections, some already progressed to scarring and constriction. One was fur-less from malnutrition.

Dr Parry-Jones attempted yet again to facilitate release for the remaining healthy flying-foxes (against the owner's wishes) and again directed that many required veterinary attention. At this point she removed Trish Wimberley's R-class banding license and reported the situation to the ABBBS and DES.

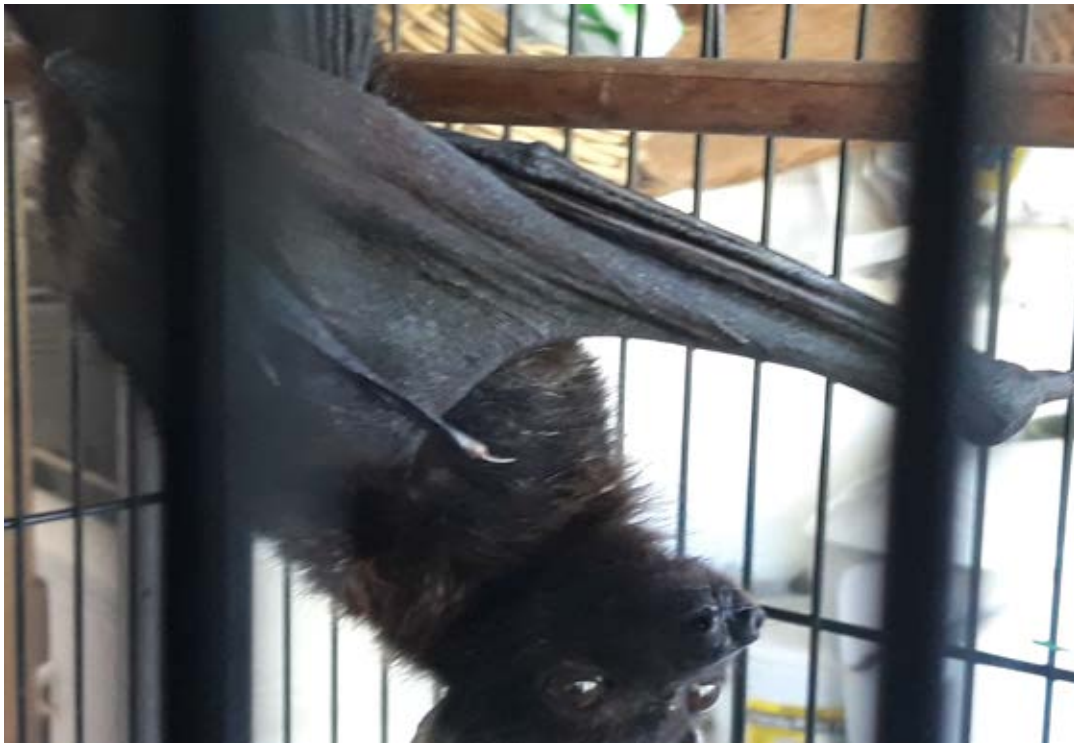
### **Problems at ABCWTC Revealed by Research into Banding Records**

- Animals fit for release were held in captivity for years for no valid reason;
- Animals developed long-term infections, gained injuries and lost limbs during prolonged time held in captivity;
- Animals showed progressive worsening of treatable conditions over time demonstrating a lack of veterinary treatment;
- Healthy animals, including many juveniles, were held in captivity until they were unreleasable;
- Healthy animals sent by other carers to the ABCWTC for release were held in captivity until they were unreleasable;
- Flying-foxes were falsely reported to ABBBS as released and instead held in captivity at the ABCWTC for up to 7 years, until the premises were closed in 2018;
- Animals held at the ABCWTC showed marked deterioration over time and none recorded any improvement.

### ***Deterioration of untreated conditions***

Carers of flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC were struck by the advanced nature of the chronic conditions seen in many animals (Wade Appendix 7, Ridgway Appendix 9.2, Brayley Appendix 9.3). These conditions in normal rehabilitation situations never advance this far, as it is a duty of care to seek veterinary attention for such treatable conditions. ABBBS banding records from 2015 and 2016 support the conclusion that health problems identified in 2015 remained untreated until the flying-foxes were removed from the property in 2018.

This is Olga.



Olga was banded at Australian Bat Clinic as an adult in July 2015 (FA 160, 679g). Dr Parry-Jones recorded Olga's health notes at the time as "bad fungus, wing contracting" and advised that she (along with many other bats) required veterinary attention.

When Olga was rescued from the Australian Bat Clinic on 8 August 2018 (weighing 544g, 56g underweight), her triage notes stated, "extremely bad wing fungus".

Her carer notes (9 August) state: "Wing horribly contracted with fingertips bent inwards. Ears scabbed from chronic infection. Very stressed on handling - assume pain ++"

Olga's wings were so severely deformed and shrunk from years of chronic infection that exposed finger bones were protruding from her wing membrane. She was in severe and constant pain, and was strongly resistant to handling, crying out and struggling when touched. She had lived more than three years of her life suffering from this painfully advanced form of a treatable condition.

On 11 August 2018, Olga was euthanased on humane grounds at RSPCA Wacol. Her notes recorded at the time state: "Wings grossly deformed with exposed bone. In severe pain." Her detailed veterinary assessment and photographs are on record and can be obtained from RSPCA Wildlife Hospital (Wacol).





<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Olga"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7386415
<b>Banding date</b>	July 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Bad fungus, wing contracting		
<b>8 Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. Extremely bad wing fungus.		
<b>9 Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Wing horribly contracted with fingertips bent inwards. Ears scabbed from chronic infection. Very stressed on handling - assume pain ++		
<b>11 Aug 2018 Outcome</b>	Euthanased RSPCA Wacol. Wings grossly deformed with exposed bone. In severe pain.		

Olga was one of 22 flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC in 2018, who were documented as having wing membrane infections when first seen by Dr Parry-Jones in 2015-16. Every one of these animals had deteriorated to being unreleasable by 2018. All have been euthanased, apart from 4 pregnant females who were allowed to give birth and raise their babies first. See Table 2 below.

The fact that most animals removed from the ABCWTC in 2018 were able to be successfully treated for wing infections in a week suggests that none of these animals were ever treated at the ABCWTC. This is clear and cruel breach of duty of care by the ABCWTC proprietor who was advised on numerous prior occasions by Dr Parry-Jones that the animals required immediate veterinary attention and treatment for the conditions that finally proved fatal for many.

Table 2 on the following page shows the deterioration over time of the flying-foxes documented as having wing infections in 2015 and/or 2016.

Note: The notation "Singapore Project" refers to flying-foxes euthanased for a university research project, which was collecting tissue samples from unreleasable, rehabilitated black flying-foxes who were already destined to be euthanased, as an alternative to taking healthy animals from the wild. The ABCWTC had previously supplied animals to this project. Carers of the flying-foxes removed in August 2018 were given the option of contributing animals destined for euthanasia to the project; most declined. Most of the animals taken for the "Singapore Project" have no veterinary or carer assessments recorded. However, the fact that their fate was quickly decided (as they were immediately assessed as unsuitable for rehabilitation) and that all but 3 had been banded in 2016 or earlier, indicates that they were likely to have been in very poor condition, potentially worse than those seen by carers.



**Table 2: Deterioration Over Time of Animals Noted to Have Membrane Infection in 2015-16.**

NS= Not seen.

QPD = Query put down (indicates need for vet review).

ABBBS#	Year Banded	Age at Banding	Sex	Species	2015 Condition	2016 Condition	2018 Condition	Last Status
7366347	2012	Juvenile	M	Black		v bad fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366367	2012	Juvenile	F	Grey	constricted, bad fur, bad fungus	NS	constricted wings, bad fungus, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7366424	2015	Juvenile	M	Black	bad fungus	minor fungus and damage	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366428	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	fungus but ok	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366444	2015	Juvenile	F	Black	shocking wings	fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374547	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	bad fungus, left wing	wings atrophied	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7379702	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	shocking QPD	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386415	2015	Adult	F	Black	bad fungus, wing contracting	NS	extremely bad wing fungus	Euthanased
7386432	2015	Adult	F	Black	bad wings	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386460	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	bit constricted right/ fungus	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386463	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	bad fungus/ right constricted	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386465	2015	Juvenile	M	Grey	fungus/not constricting, white	no obvious injury, but cant fly	slightly slimy wings	Euthanased
7386478	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	severely constricted, bad fur	NS	dislocation, slimy wings	In care, ?pregnant
7386483	2015	Adult	F	Black	pocket, fungus	constriction L	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386489	2015	Adult	F	Black	constricted left, fungus	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7365753	2016	Adult	M	Grey		fungus/needs cut	T3 & T4 fused	Euthanased
7366586	2016	Adult	M	Black		bit of fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374508	2016	Adult	F	Black		fungus	scabby, bad wings, exp bone, vet	In care, ?pregnant
7387529	2016	Juvenile	F	Black		fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387589	2016	Juvenile	F	Black		fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387594	2016	Adult	M	Black		fungus unreleasable	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387620	2016	Sub-adult	F	Black		fungus	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care



### **Healthy animals kept captive until unreleasable**

Many of the flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC showed no evidence of past injuries typical of those seen in adult flying-foxes rescued and brought into care (Friebe, Appendix 9.5). It soon became apparent that the majority of these animals now deformed by chronic wing infections were not failed rehabilitation patients, but rather hand-raised orphans that had never been released (Brayley, Appendix 9.3). Because of their small size and familiarity with humans, it was thought at first that many were the last season's orphans, which should have been released six months earlier. However, as animals began to recover following veterinary treatment and good nutrition, their sexual maturity became apparent (in the case of some females, via obvious pregnancy), demonstrating an age of at least three years. With further investigation into the ABBBS banding records, it was discovered that among these animals were hand-raised orphans who had been kept unnecessarily confined at the ABCWTC since 2015.

### **The "Kids" cage**

The 120 healthy juveniles found by Dr Parry-Jones in 2015 are a prime example of this. All were fit and able to fly in 2015. In 2016, 69% of those found in a partial survey of the property (20 of 29) were afflicted by conditions of poor husbandry (wing infections, malnutrition), which could have been corrected with appropriate care and veterinary attention. Tragically, 8 of these once-healthy orphans, born in 2014, were found still on the premises in 2018 in severely debilitated condition: one had a healed fracture, two had long-standing wing membrane infections, and 4 were euthanased for the "Singapore project" with no assessment recorded. Only 2 were eventually able to be rehabilitated and released. The fate of the remainder of the initial 120 is unknown.

The records of the eight animals found in 2018 are detailed below and show their deterioration over time.

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Romeo"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366424
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 134mm (juvenile)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Minor fungus and damage, non-flyer. (FA 156mm)		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Female "Tanya"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366425
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Old fracture of radius.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Last reported still in care (pregnant). Fate unknown.		





<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Bette"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366426
<b>Banding date</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 150 mm (sub-adult)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Igor"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366431
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Banded. Flying and ready for release. FA 165 mm (sub-adult)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC "Slight slimy wing".		
<b>Outcome</b>	23 Oct 2018 – Released after rehabilitation.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Ferdinand"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366432
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 139mm (juvenile)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. "right thumb, wing fungus, dislocated finger."		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Connie"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366444
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 133mm (juvenile)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying, wing fungus. (FA 156mm)		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366446
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 137mm (juvenile)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying, wound on chest, wings constricted. FA 153mm.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Wendy"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366447
<b>Banding date</b>	2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released. FA 130mm (juvenile)		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Present, no comments (FA 155mm)		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. "Fungal infection both wings, pregnant"		
<b>Outcome</b>	14 Dec 2018 – Released after rehabilitation, with baby girl.		

With further investigation, more was discovered regarding the history of some of these young flying-foxes, as they were previously on record as healthy, flying, hand-raised orphans sent from another bat care group to the ABCWTC for release.

### ***Hoarding of healthy animals sent to the ABCWTC for release***

#### **The 2015 BCRQ orphan crèche and release**

Research into the database records of Bat Conservation & Rescue Queensland (BCRQ) in Brisbane shows that a large number of these juveniles found by Dr Parry-Jones were BCRQ orphans sent to ABCWTC for release to the wild. In early 2015, BCRQ sent 107 hand-raised flying-fox orphans to ABCWTC to be released. It is a regular practice for flying-fox groups to soft-release their orphans at another facility near a wild colony and, as is customary, BCRQ paid the ABCWTC for this service. A total of 142 flying-foxes from BCRQ went to the ABCWTC for release over 2015-16.

### Normal Crèche and Release Process

After being hand-raised, flying-fox juveniles of around 3-4 months of age are moved to a flight cage for the processes of crèche (socialising, dehumanising and flight practice) and release (continuing these processes on the site from which they will be soft-released). This may happen at one or two locations and typically takes 1 to 3 months, with the young bats being released between 4 to 6 months of age. This is timed to coincide with socialisation patterns seen in young flying-foxes in the wild, and to optimise the integration of the orphans into the wild colony (Augee & Ford, 1999).



Figure 23: Young flying-foxes in crèche cage at Batavia Flying Fox Sanctuary, February 2018.

BCRQ's first crèche group of 29 flying-foxes was sent to the Australian Bat Clinic for release on 18 January 2015. They had already been crèched for several weeks at BCRQ's crèche cage at Logan Reserve and were flight-tested and found to be able flyers before transfer. The expectation was that they would be released within a typical time of 4-6 weeks. At ABCWTC they were banded with ABBBS bands and these numbers recorded in BCRQ's database.

Data matching of BCRQ animal records database and ABBBS records reveals that:

- 21 of the 29 BCRQ orphans, sent to the ABCWTC in January 2015, were found by Dr Parry-Jones still in captivity in July 2015, months after they should have been released.
- 11 of the 29 were found still caged on the premises after a year, in February 2016. Of these, 6 were documented as having membrane infections, 4 with constriction. Only 2 could still fly.
- 3 of these flying-foxes were found still caged in August 2018, after 3.5 years at the ABCWTC. None were able to be released; two Black Flying-foxes were euthanased; one female Grey-headed Flying-fox (pregnant in 2018) is still reported as being in care.



The individual records and sightings of the 21 BCRQ bats found on-site in July 2015 follow. Note: Romeo, Tanya and Bette's records also appeared in the previous case study as they were among the animals that were found still in captivity at ABCWTC in 2018.

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Romeo"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366424
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	3 years, 7 months
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Minor fungus and damage, non-flyer.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Found on-site. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Female "Tanya"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366425
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	3 years, 7 months
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Old fracture of radius.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Last reported still in care. Fate unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Bette"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366426
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	3 years, 7 months
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Found on-site. No condition recorded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Sandra's baby"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366402
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying. Bad fungus/constricting		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		





<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Khaleesi"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366403
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Chloe"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366404
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying. Injury + pocket (L)		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Stuart"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366409
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Sir Henry"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366412
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying. Very bad fungus, constricted wings.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		



<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Male "Baloo"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366413
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Bad fungus, constricted.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Ryan"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366414
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Found still on-site. No condition recorded.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "B2"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366420
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Bella Donna's baby"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366422
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year total unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Not flying.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Aurora"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366401
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Lushus"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366406
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Lucinda"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366408
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Stud"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366411
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Constricted. QPD. Bleeding fungus.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Bulbasaur"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366415
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Olaf"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366416
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Some slimy fungus. Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Elsa"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366418
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Clarke"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366419
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Some fungus. Flying. OK for release.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		





<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "BB"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366423
<b>Sent to ABCWTC</b>	18 Jan 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months, unknown
<b>Jan 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. Sent to ABCWTC for release.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Flying. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

Of the second group of BCRQ juveniles sent to ABCWTC on 23 Feb 2015, only 13 were able to be matched to their ABBBS band numbers (by their name and BCRQ animal number recorded in the ABBBS records). All 13 were found still captive on the premises 5 months later in July 2015. Two were noted as having "constriction" and "fungus" at the time.

Two other BCRQ orphans sent later in the year had their band numbers recorded in BCRQ's database. "Marilyn" (ABBBS # 7366487) was seen by Dr Parry-Jones in July 2015 and her wings noted to be "constricted". "Aaron" (ABBBS # 7374685) was found at ABCWTC 7 months later in February 2016.

The remaining 63 flying-fox orphans sent to BCRQ in 2015 were not able to be definitively matched in both BCRQ and ABBBS records. However, considering the overall number sent that year to the ABCWTC (107) and the number (120) of mostly young, releasable flying-foxes found in the "Kids" cage, including the other, identified BCRQ bats, it is very likely that many of the others were also BCRQ's orphans. More information may become available as BCRQ's carers are informed of this distressing information and research their own records for ABBBS band numbers.

A significant number of the BCRQ juveniles sent to the ABCWTC for release were orphaned in the Casino heat stress event of November 2014. This news will also be a cruel blow to the many wildlife carers who braved heat-wave conditions to rescue and resuscitate those babies retrieved from the bodies of their dead mothers.

### ***Animals reported as released found captive at ABCWTC years later***

Older banding records reveal 9 bats, reported to ABBBS as released between 2011 and 2014, which were subsequently found still in captivity at the ABCWTC up to 7 years later, most in severely deteriorated condition (two had lost wings). 5 of the 9 were found still there in 2018.

Some show profound deterioration over time. One male Black Flying-fox (ABBBS #7366079) was recorded as flying and reported as released in 2011, then found in captivity at ABCWTC with "no wings" 5 years later in 2016.

Male Black Flying-fox (ABBBS #7366247) had recovered from a barbed-wire injury and was reported released in 2011. He was then found in captivity at ABCWTC 4 years later with membrane infection and one wing missing.



Male Black Flying-fox (ABBBS #7366347) was recorded as flying and reported released in 2011, then found in captivity at ABCWTC with a bad fungal infection in 2016. His condition upon removal in 2018 led him to be euthanased.

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366079
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 June 2011	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>4 years, 8 months
<b>June 2011 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Non flyer, outside.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	No wings		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Assume died.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366247
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 June 2011	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>4 years, unknown
<b>June 2011 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released. Barb wire scar inside fifth finger.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Rehab, no right wing, fungus.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Assume died.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female "Serendipity"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366324
<b>Banding Date</b>	19 May 2012	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 years, 2 months
<b>May 2012 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Still in care. No comments.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Vet check 3/8/18 Wing fungus. "Education Animals".		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Last reported still in care.		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366347
<b>Banding Date</b>	27 May 2012	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 years, 2 months
<b>May 2012 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	V bad fungus		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. Unreleasable.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased for "Singapore Project".		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Female "Samantha"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366349
<b>Banding Date</b>	27 May 2012	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 years, 2 months
<b>May 2012 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released. Barbed wire		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Adoptive MO07387539		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released, Woodford 23 Oct 2018.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366361
<b>Banding Date</b>	27 May 2012	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>3 years, 9 months
<b>May 2012 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Bad fungus both wings		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366367
<b>Banding Date</b>	27 May 2012	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 years, 2 months
<b>May 2012 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Constricted. Bad fur, bad fungus.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Removed from ABCWTC. Constricted wings, bad fungus, pregnant.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Last reported still in care with baby.		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Noel"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366391
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 March 2014	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>1 year, 2 months
<b>May 2014 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Little fungus. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	--		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male "Harry"	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366397
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 March 2014	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>4 years, 8 months
<b>June 2014 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Wings good. To be released.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Still in care. No comments.		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	Good wings but wing fungus.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Released, Woodford 23 Oct 2018.		

### ***Deterioration over time spent in captivity***

Flying-foxes have been known to live for up to 30 years in captivity, however at the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre, time in care was associated with increased mortality (see Parry-Jones, Appendix 1).

In 2018 only 7 of the 94 previously banded flying-foxes (known to have been at the ABCWTC for 2 years or more) were able to be rehabilitated and released. None of those released had any health conditions documented by Dr Parry-Jones in 2015 or 2016, however all had "slimy wing" when removed in 2018, apart from Grey-headed female "Samantha" (ABBBS # 7366349).

Table 3 below shows all 94 previously banded Black and Grey-headed Flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC in 2018 and any health notes from 2015, 2016 or 2018. All but one show deterioration over time. Over one-third were juveniles or sub-adults when first seen in 2012-2016.





**Table 3: Data Matching Results of Flying-foxes Banded in 2012-2016 and Removed From the ABCWTC in 2018.**

NS = Not seen.

QPD = Query put down (indicates need for vet review). NF = Non-flyer.

ABBBS#	Year Banded	Age at Banding	Sex	Species	2015 Condition	2016 Condition	2018 Condition	Last Status
7366324	2012		F	Black	NS		Vet check 3/8/18 wing fungus	In care
7366347	2012	Juvenile	M	Black	NS	Very bad fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366349	2012	Adult	F	Grey		adoptive MO 07387539	Released	Released
7366367	2012	Juvenile	F	Grey	constricted, bad fur, bad fungus	NS	constricted wings, bad fungus, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7366397	2014	Juvenile	M	Grey	wings good, flyer		good wings but wing fungus	Released
7366424	2015	Juvenile	M	Black	bad fungus	minor fungus and damage	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366425	2015	Adult	F	Grey	flyer	flyer	old fracture radius	In care, ?pregnant
7366426	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	severely constricted QPD	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366428	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	fungus but ok	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366431	2015	Adult	M	Grey	fur regrowing/ good wings, flyer		slightly slimy, Released	Released
7366432	2015	Juvenile	M	Black	flyer	NS	Rt thumb, fungus, dislocated finger	Euthanased
7366444	2015	Juvenile	F	Black	shocking wings	fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366446	2015	Juvenile	M	Black	flyer	wound on chest, wings constricted	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366447	2015	Juvenile	M	Grey	flyer	flyer	fungal both wings	Released
7366449	2015	Adult	M	Grey	constricted QPD		dislocated finger T3, flyer?	Euthanased
7366462	2015	Adult	F	Black	rehab/wing tips bone	1/2 wing R&L	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7366551	2015		M	Black	present		slightly slimy	Euthanased
7366558	2015		F	Black	present	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374547	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	bad fungus, left wing	wings atrophied	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374573	2015	Adult	F	Black	rehab, constricted left wing	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374614	2015	Juvenile	F	Grey	constricted, v skinny		slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7374623	2015	Adult	F	Black	pocket right/NF	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7374698	2015	Adult	F	Black	poor fur/has spectacles	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7379701	2015	Adult	F	Grey	shocking constricted QPD	NS	Non flyer, needs vet check	In care, ?pregnant
7379702	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	shocking QPD	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased



ABBS#	Year Banded	Age at Banding	Sex	Species	2015 Condition	2016 Condition	2018 Condition	Last Status
7379708	2015	Adult	F	Black	with newborn M	good wings lactating baby?	left wing needs surgery, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7386148	2015		M	Grey		NS	slimy wings, ear injury	In care
7386410	2015	Adult	F	Grey	present		slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7386415	2015	Adult	F	Black	bad fungus, wing contracting	NS	extremely bad wing fungus	Euthanased
7386417	2015	Adult	F	Black	bad wings	L wing damage	geriatric and pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7386425	2015	Juvenile	F	Black	constricted	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386431	2015	Adult	F	Black	constricted tip bare QPD	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386432	2015	Adult	F	Black	bad wings	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386433	2015	Adult	F	Black	left wing warped NF	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386448	2015	Juvenile	F	Black	lesion on bone left	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386456	2015	Adult	F	Black	rehab pocket/flyer	NS	Non flyer, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7386457	2015	Adult	F	Black	missing claw left thumb	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386460	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	bit constricted right/fungus	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386463	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	bad fungus/ right constricted	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386465	2015	Juvenile	M	Grey	fungus/ not constricting, white	no obvious injury, but cant fly.	slightly slimy wings	Euthanased
7386466	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	constricted left/ wingtip right	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386467	2015	Juvenile	F	Black	constricted both		Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386469	2015	Adult		Black	rehab, constricted 1/2 wing	NS	Euthanased	Euthanased
7386471	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	bit constricted/ tried to fly	bad fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386475	2015	Sub-adult	M	Black	constricted left, bad fur	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386478	2015	Sub-adult	F	Black	severely constricted, bad fur	NS	dislocation, slimy wings	In care, ?pregnant
7386483	2015	Adult	F	Black	pocket, fungus	constriction L	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386484	2015	Adult	M	Grey	rehab, constricted wings	NS		Euthanased
7386488	2015	Sub-adult	M	Grey	bad fur, left wing ok	NS	slimy wings	Euthanased
7386489	2015	Adult	F	Black	constricted left, fungus	NS	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7386495	2015	Juvenile	F	Grey	tiny bit fungus	minor fungus	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7386496	2015	Adult	M	Black	right wingtip bad	pocket R wingtip	Singapore Project	Euthanased



ABBS#	Year Banded	Age at Banding	Sex	Species	2016 Condition	2018 Condition	Last Status
7302900	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat	Education Bat -non flyer, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7323629	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat	Education Bat -non flyer	In care, ?pregnant
7362947	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat	slimy wings, ?pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7363362	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat	Education Bat -non flyer	In care, ?pregnant
7365753	2016	Adult	M	Grey	fungus/needs cut	T3 & T4 fused	Euthanased
7366586	2016	Adult	M	Black	bit of fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7373452	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat		In care, ?pregnant
7373629	2016		F	Grey	Education Bat	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7374508	2016	Adult	F	Black	fungus	scabby, bad wings, exp bone, vet	In care, ?pregnant
7374620	2016	Adult	F	Black		Singapore Project	Euthanased
7378661	2016	Adult	F	Grey	Education Bat	Education Bat -non flyer	In care, ?pregnant
7378662	2016	Adult	M	Grey	Education Bat	Education Bat -1 wing	Euthanased
7387529	2016	Juvenile	F	Black	fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387536	2016	Adult	F	Grey	1/2 R wing, nice	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387542	2016	Adult	F	Grey	unlikely to be Releasable	dislocated finger, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387544	2016	Adult	F	Black	damage both wings	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387545	2016	Adult	M	Black	unreleasable	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387554	2016	Adult	M	Black	left wing tip flipped over	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387556	2016	Adult	F	Grey	injured L thumb/ banded R	fungus	In care, ?pregnant
7387557	2016	Adult	M	Grey		Needs wing snip, bacterial infection	Euthanased
7387560	2016	Adult	M	Grey	both wing joints odd	Needs surgery, T3 & T4 fused	In care
7387562	2016	Adult	M	Black	unreleasable	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387563	2016	Sub-adult	M	Black	broke 3rd finger	bacterial wings?	Euthanased
7387588	2016	Juvenile	M	Black		Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387589	2016	Juvenile	F	Black	fungus	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387594	2016	Adult	M	Black	fungus unreleasable	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387599	2016	Juvenile	F	Grey		dislocation, slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387603	2016	Adult	F	Black	pocket R. Unreleasable		In care
7387604	2016	Adult	F	Grey	2nd finger odd angle	slimy wings, T2, left wing	Released
7387608	2016	Adult	F	Black		pregnant?	Pregnant, in care
7387612	2016	Juvenile	M	Grey	bald	good, little bit slimy	Euthanased
7387617	2016	Adult	M	Grey		fungus	Released
7387618	2016	Sub-adult	F	Grey		bad fungus	Released



ABBBS#	Year Banded	Age at Banding	Sex	Species	2016 Condition	2018 Condition	Last Status
7387619	2016	Sub-adult	F	Black		Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387620	2016	Sub-adult	F	Black	fungus	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387628	2016	Juvenile	F	Black		fungus, constriction, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387630	2016	Sub-adult	F	Black		pregnant	Euthanased
7387632	2016	Adult	F	Black	R 1/2 wing, bent thumb L	slimy wings, pregnant	Pregnant, in care
7387633	2016	Adult	F	Black	missing thumb right, pocket right	education animals	In care, ?pregnant
7387642	2016	Adult	F	Black	Unreleasable, foreshortened R	Singapore Project	Euthanased
7387655	2016		F	Black		both wings slimy	In care, ?pregnant
7387656	2016	Adult	F	Black	No Right Wing, Unreleasable	Singapore Project	Euthanased

The ABBBS records are critical evidence and undeniable proof of animal hoarding on a scale previously unseen in wildlife rehabilitation in Australia. Without the banding of these animals, it would be impossible to determine how long any of the animals were captive, where they had come from, and why they were there in the first place or what happened to them over time. As there is no reliable record keeping of the ABCWTC bats apart from the banding records, the fate of many of the animals will remain unknown, however based on the condition of animals removed from ABCWTC in August 2018, it is unlikely many survived to release.



### **Missing wings**

A surprising number of flying-foxes were recorded in surveys at ABCWTC as having only one wing. Several of these animals had appeared intact in earlier records.

Male Black Flying-fox (ABBBS # 7366079) was reported as flying and ready for release in 2011, then as having "no wings" 5 years later. Having no wings would not only be extremely distressing for a flighted animal and restrict their mobility, but also reduce their ability to thermoregulate.

Male Black Flying-fox (ABBBS # 7366247) had recovered from a barbed-wire injury and was reported released in 2011. He was then found 4 years later with membrane infection and one wing missing, presumed amputated.

This Grey-headed Flying-fox male (ABBBS # 7378662) removed from the ABCWTC in 2018 had all 4 finger bones neatly surgically amputated. There was no record of him missing a wing when seen in 2016.



*Figure 24: Grey-headed Flying-fox male (ABBBS # 7378662), amputated right wing.*



Pinson also reported (in 2008) flying-foxes seen at the ABCWTC with "whole wings chopped off" (Appendix 5). Who was performing these amputations and did they have authority from DES as required by the CoP 7.2.6.1? It is difficult to imagine any registered veterinarian agreeing to perform such radical and unethical surgery. Below are the flying-foxes recorded in ABBBS records as missing at least one wing.

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366079
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 June 2011	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>4 years, 8 months
<b>June 2011 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Non flyer, outside.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	No wings		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Assume died.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7366247
<b>Banding Date</b>	25 June 2011	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>4 years
<b>June 2011 Assessment</b>	Flying. Reported to ABBBS as released. Barb wire scar inside fifth finger.		
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Rehab, no right wing, fungus.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Assume died.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7386421
<b>Banding Date</b>	July 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>6 months
<b>July 2015 Assessment</b>	Unreleasable, bad fungus.		
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	No right wing. 1/2 left wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown. Assume died.		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7378662
<b>Banding Date</b>	July 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	>2 years
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Education Bat		
<b>Aug 2018 Assessment</b>	No right wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Euthanased.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Male	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7387615
<b>Banding Date</b>	20 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Mother has only 1 wing. Not banded.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		



<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7387656
<b>Banding Date</b>	20 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	No right wing. Unreleasable.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Grey-headed Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	7387683
<b>Banding Date</b>	20 Feb 2016	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Missing left wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	Not banded
<b>Banding Date</b>	July 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Rehab, one wing		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		

<b>Black Flying-fox</b>	Female	<b>ABBBS number</b>	Not banded
<b>Banding Date</b>	July 2015	<b>Time at ABCWTC</b>	Unknown
<b>Feb 2016 Assessment</b>	Rehab, good, no left wing.		
<b>Outcome</b>	Unknown.		



## ANALYSIS

### Statutory Obligations on Animal Care

Legally the animals at the ABCWTC should have been covered by the existing legislation that defines animal cruelty and prohibits offences involving animal cruelty. Similarly, the laws governing the rehabilitation of native animals should have been able to protect native animals from animal cruelty while they are undergoing rehabilitation. The relevant section of the laws are as follows:

**1. The Code of Practice—Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland** (under the Nature Protection Act, 1992; administered by the Department of the Environment and Science) specifies the minimum standards of care for native animals.

#### 4.1

The broad objectives of the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned protected animals are to:

- relieve suffering in sick, injured or orphaned protected animals by providing appropriate husbandry and care, pain relief, veterinary treatment when required, and timely euthanasia in cases with a poor prognosis (4.1.1)
- contribute to the conservation of nature by promptly returning suitably rehabilitated animals to their native habitats. (4.1.2)

The Code also states that wildlife rehabilitators at all times have a

- Duty of care: under section 17 of the **Animal Care and Protection Act 2001**, a person in charge of an animal during its rescue, care, rehabilitation or release has a statutory duty of care to appropriately provide for the animal's welfare. (3.1.1)

They are required to:

- Avoid harm: "Even well intentioned care or treatments may prolong or worsen an animal's suffering, and inappropriate release of animals may have significant detrimental effects on local ecosystems and wildlife communities." (3.1.2)

and

- Relieve suffering: "a main objective of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation is to relieve suffering in sick, injured or orphaned wildlife; it is not to protect and preserve life at all costs. " (3.1.4)



**2. The Animal Care and Protection Act 2001** prohibits the general animal offences of:

- Breach of duty of care, and
- Animal cruelty

*Part 1 Breach of duty of care*

(1) A person in charge of an animal owes a duty of care to it.

(2) The person must not breach the duty of care.

(3) For subsection (2), a person breaches the duty only if the person does not take reasonable steps to—

(a) provide the animal's needs for the following in a way that is appropriate—

- (i) food and water;
- (ii) accommodation or living conditions for the animal;
- (iii) to display normal patterns of behaviour;
- (iv) the treatment of disease or injury; or

(b) ensure any handling of the animal by the person, or caused by the person, is appropriate.

*Part 2 Cruelty offences*

(1) A person must not be cruel to an animal - a person is taken to be cruel to an animal if the person does any of the following to the animal—

(a) causes it pain that, in the circumstances, is unjustifiable, unnecessary or unreasonable;

(b) beats it so as to cause the animal pain;

(c) abuses, terrifies, torments or worries it;

(d) overdrives, overrides or overworks it;

(e) uses on the animal an electrical device prescribed under a regulation;

(f) confines or transports it—

- (i) without appropriate preparation, including, for example, appropriate food, rest, shelter or water; or
- (ii) when it is unfit for the confinement or transport; or
- (iii) in a way that is inappropriate for the animal's welfare;
- (iv) in an unsuitable container or vehicle;





(g) kills it in a way that—

- (i) is inhumane; or
- (ii) causes it not to die quickly; or
- (iii) causes it to die in unreasonable pain;

(h) unjustifiably, unnecessarily or unreasonably—

- (i) injures or wounds it; or
- (ii) overcrowds or overloads it.

### Definitions

**confine** an animal includes doing any of the following to it—

- (a) caging or keeping it in captivity in some other way;
- (b) maiming, mutilating or pinioning it or subjecting it to a device to hinder or prevent its free movement;
- (c) tethering it.

### Statutory Implications of Case Histories

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that the standard of care at the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre has failed to achieve even the broad objectives of the *Code of Practice, Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (CoP).

The case studies shown demonstrate that the ABCWTC has failed all of the CoP's basic requirements to provide:

- appropriate husbandry and care;
- pain relief;
- veterinary treatment when required;
- timely euthanasia;
- and to return suitably rehabilitated animals to their native habitats.

Beyond that it would be excessive to list every individual standard breached.

Regarding the *Animal Care and Protection Act*, Part 1, there has been a demonstrated ongoing failure of duty of care to provide the animals' needs in all four requirements of:

- food and water;



- appropriate accommodation;
- expression of normal behaviour; and
- treatment of disease or injury.

Of these, the non-treatment of disease or injury is particularly egregious, causing animals immense suffering due to untreated conditions, including fractures of major bones, chronic infections, abscesses, severe infections, dislocations, ruptured joints and exposed bone.

Regarding Part 2, Cruelty offences, animals have clearly been confined inappropriately and denied timely euthanasia for painful conditions.

The detailed 2018 reports by Cochrane and Roberts (Appendix 2 and 3) describe extremely poor animal husbandry practised at the ABCWTC, which violated every standard in the *Code of Practice, Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (CoP) on housing (10) and provision of food and water (11). Their reports document animals kept in dirty, crowded, inappropriately designed and built housing, and report animals showing injuries and aberrant behaviour from their housing. They show animals kept in small cages that did not allow full body movement, and animals fed insufficient and inappropriate food and left without water for extended periods. Many animals removed from the ABCWTC were underweight, malnourished and limited in their movement (Brayley, Appendix 9.3, Friebe, Appendix 9.5).

These are not only violations of the CoP but cruelty offences under the *Animal Care and Protection Act, 2001*. These animals were being:

- confined without appropriate food or water — Cruelty offence f(i);
- confined in a way that is inappropriate for the animal's welfare — Cruelty offence f(iii);
- confined in an unsuitable container or vehicle — Cruelty offence f(iv); and
- unjustifiably, unnecessarily or unreasonably overcrowded — Cruelty offence(h)(ii)

Their confinement was also a breach of the duty of care to:

- (a) provide the animal's needs for the following in a way that is appropriate—
  - (i) food and water;
  - (ii) accommodation or living conditions for the animal;
  - (iii) to display normal patterns of behaviour.



Over 200 individual cases of untreated wing membrane infections were seen in the animals removed from the ABCWTC in 2018. Several animals were found with painful, untreated fractures and abscesses. Numerous animals had exposed bone and exposed and dislocated joints. These are breaches of the duty of care to provide:

- (iv) the treatment of disease or injury;

Dead flying-foxes were regularly found in the cages at the ABCWTC (Roberts, Appendix 3). Parry-Jones describes many animals found in 2015 and 2016 that were crippled by wing membrane damage and could not fly but most of these were not seen again (Appendix 1). Others, even once-healthy, releasable animals, were documented later as missing wings or part of wings, and then not seen again. What happened to these animals? They could not leave, their injuries were beyond repair, and no records of euthanasia have been provided.

Allowing animals to die slowly from untreated, painful conditions is also a cruelty offence, when a person:

- (g) kills it in a way that—
  - (ii) causes it not to die quickly; or
  - (iii) causes it to die in unreasonable pain;

The presence of flying-foxes with amputated wings raises serious questions. Who was performing these amputations and did they have authority from DES as required by the CoP 7.2.6.1? If not, it would indicate a cruelty offence to the animal, if a person

- (h) unjustifiably, unnecessarily or unreasonably—
  - (i) injures or wounds it.



## **Problems Identified**

### **1. Costs of Caring for Large Numbers of Flying-foxes**

The cost of adequately caring for large numbers of flying-foxes is high. The ABCWTC has posted annual incomes between \$127,000 and \$132,000 from 2014 to 2017, which would demonstrate that sufficient funding had been raised to adequately care for and house the animals through to release. However there appears to be clear evidence that animals' needs have not been met to any acceptable standard and they have instead been significantly neglected with regards to their nutritional, veterinary and housing needs.

The fact that many animals were not being released at the appropriate stage of their care, and instead kept in prolonged captivity, was a key problem.

### **2. Poor Standards of Care and Carer Education**

Concerns have been raised about animal care standards and animal welfare at the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre since its inception, and regarding the wildlife care practices of its proprietor, Trish Wimberley while a member of Wildcare, previously.


Hood & Bressan (Appendix 8) and Pinson (Appendix 5) document critically substandard housing, feeding and care of baby flying-foxes observed as early as 2004. They also document the difficulties faced in educating the ABCWTC's proprietor in acceptable standards of bat care. Parry-Jones documents animals being kept in "far from ideal conditions" in 2009-10 (Appendix 1). Cochrane and Roberts (Appendix 2, Appendix 3) document the low standards of housing and feeding at the ABCWTC, and the very poor condition of animals observed in 2017-18 before the facility closed. All contributors identify the lack of veterinary treatment provided to flying-foxes at the ABCWTC.

The ABCWTC site at Advancetown was never a suitable release site for flying-foxes; the nearest wild flying-fox camp (Canungra) is 8km away. Release sites are ideally within sight and sound of a wild colony, and preferably not more than 2 or 3 km away, to allow newly released orphans to find their way easily to the wild colony.


Evidence of the level of care given at the ABCWTC, and the poor condition of the animals kept on the property can be seen in the following posts from the ABCWTC's own Facebook page from 2013 to 2018. Many of the photographs below depict flying-foxes showing evidence of precisely the same conditions as those seen in the hundreds of bats removed from ABCWTC in August 2018 - "slimy wing", membrane scarring and contraction, contracted joints, infected and necrotic ears and signs of malnutrition.




It is unclear whether such clinical conditions in bats at the ABCWTC went unseen, unrecognised or ignored.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
13 February 2018 · 🌐


PLEASE READ AND HELP SUPPORT US - DAY 13  
We have a regular donor who has promised to match dollar for dollar EVERY CENT we raise during the month of February!  
Please donate and help us raise as much as we can!  
Thank you for your support!... [See more](#)








Olivier Fiechter and 378 others

14 comments 92 shares 2.5K views

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 Comment

 Share

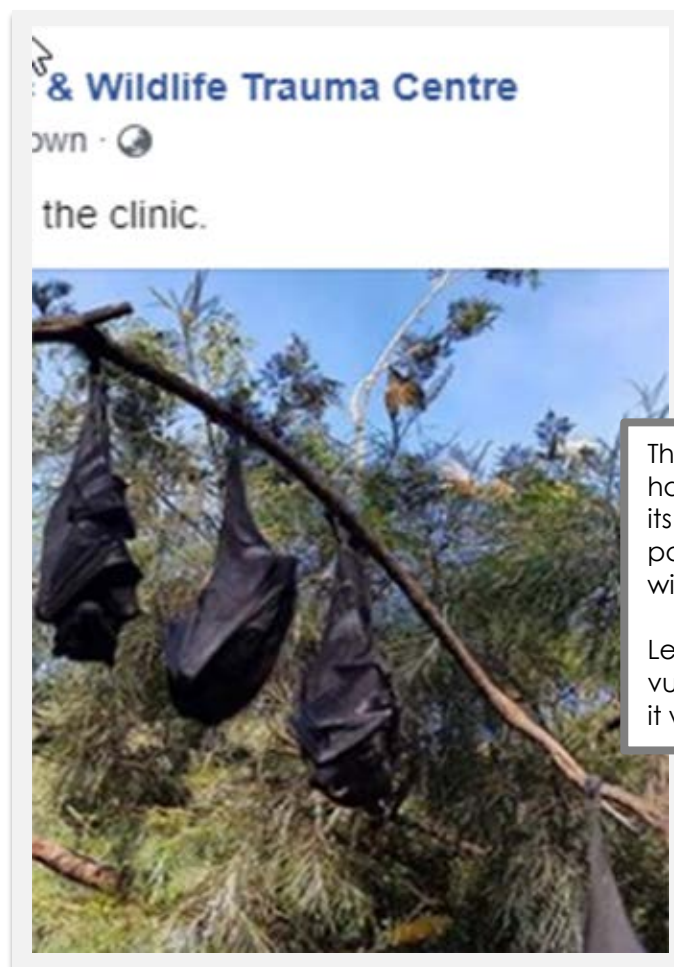


The flying-fox on the left of this photo has a severely contracted left third finger. The video shows he/she is not using the left wing at all.

The one on the right has lost half of each ear.

Video link: [facebook video ausbatclinic](#)








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 **Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
24 September 2016 · 🌐

DAY 24 of Our SEPTEMBER FUNDRAISING BLITZ– Please share this post! Please donate!


Most of you will be aware that the Clinic runs 100% on donations & volunteers. We have an exceptionally generous donator, who every year donates a generous sum. Well, that donator has made the amazing offer of matching dollar for dollar every cent we raise in donations for September, so we need a donating blitz for September ... [See more](#)



👍❤️😭 422 14 comments · 56 shares

Like Comment Share

Bathing a baby flying-fox in this fashion is unnecessary and detergents are detrimental to their skin. Flying-foxes have natural oils in their epidermis to keep wings supple and waterproof (Hall & Richards 64). Soaps and detergents can break this down and leave the skin vulnerable to infection.




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21 September 2016 · 🌐

DAY 21 of Our SEPTEMBER FUNDRAISING BLITZ– Please share this post!  
Most of you will be aware that the Clinic runs 100% on donations & volunteers. We have an exceptionally generous donator, who every year donates a generous sum. Well, that donator has made the amazing offer of matching dollar for dollar every cent we raise in donations for September, so we need a donating blitz for September  
Every day in September we will be posting, and asking for donations. We have 35,000 f... [See more](#)



👍❤️😂 197      8 comments 16 shares

This animal has severe membrane contraction on the right wing.




The distal 3rd finger joint is acutely contracted and the skin over the joint has ruptured.

This is typical of the appearance of long-standing slimy wing infections seen in the worst-affected animals removed in 2018.



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**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
16 September 2016 · 🌐

DAY 16 of Our SEPTEMBER FUNDRAISING BLITZ– Please share this post!  
Check out the long tongues!  
Photo by Dean Morgan Photography... [See more](#)




This animal has severely contracted wing membrane and joints and is hanging in an unnatural posture.

The distal finger joints of the 3rd and 4th fingers are severely contracted.

Blistering is visible on the wing membrane. Inflamed ear tips.





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Like Follow Share ...

**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** clever boy greg nice to you still know your bats  
Like · Reply · 1y

View 10 more comments

**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
26 December 2017 · 🌐

No rest for us at the Bat Clinic. How did you have animals involved in your Christmas?  
Thank you for your support!  
You can donate via Paypal <https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr.....>  
[See more](#)

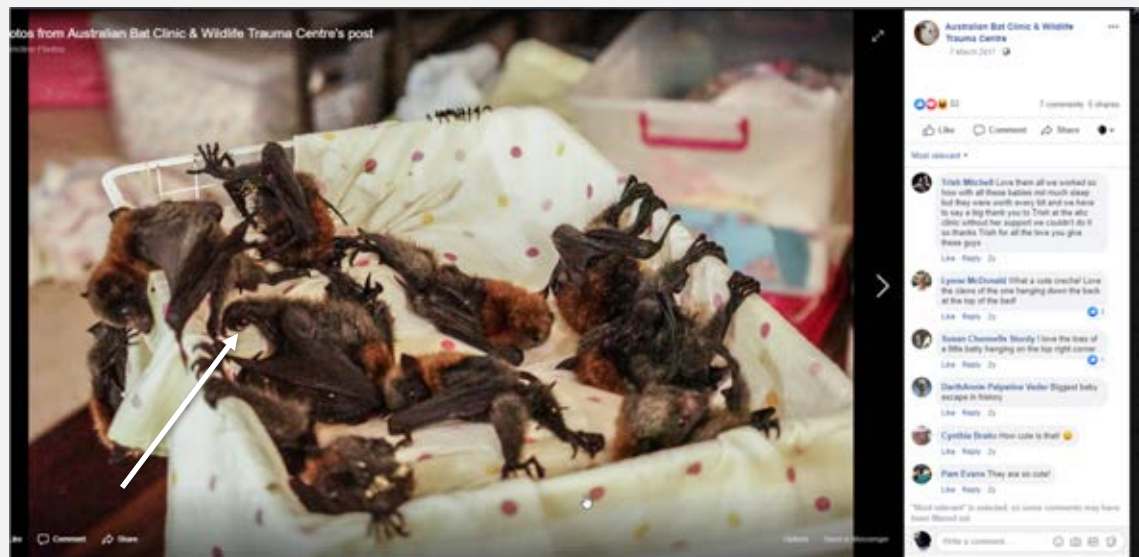


This photo shows one of the unsuitable feeding practices used at the ABCWTC. Flying-foxes need to be able to quickly snatch a piece of food and move away to eat (Hall & Richards, 81). Only the most dominant animals would be able to get any food here.





This animal is in terrible condition with fur loss and dry scaly skin.



The baby positioned at 9 o'clock lying prone is not well, if it's still alive. Its feet are curled up and not gripping anything. Baby flying-foxes instinctively grip with their feet at all times, even when sleeping, as the others demonstrate.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**

14 March 2018 · 🌐



This bat is seriously unwell. Sunken eyes to this degree indicate profound dehydration.

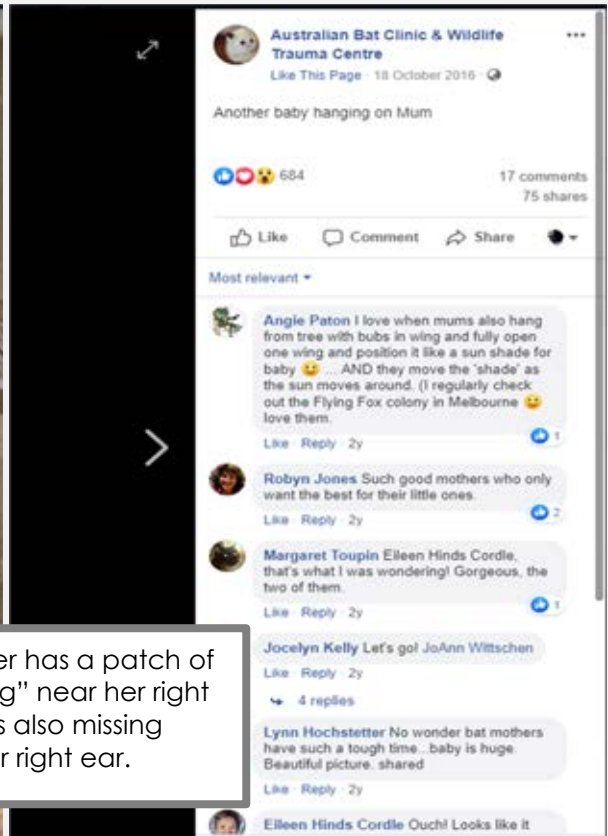
Wing membrane is dry, thin and wrinkled.

The fur is coarse and depigmented (malnutrition).

Swollen areas on ear tips.



This mother has a patch of "slimy wing" near her right leg. She is also missing part of her right ear.

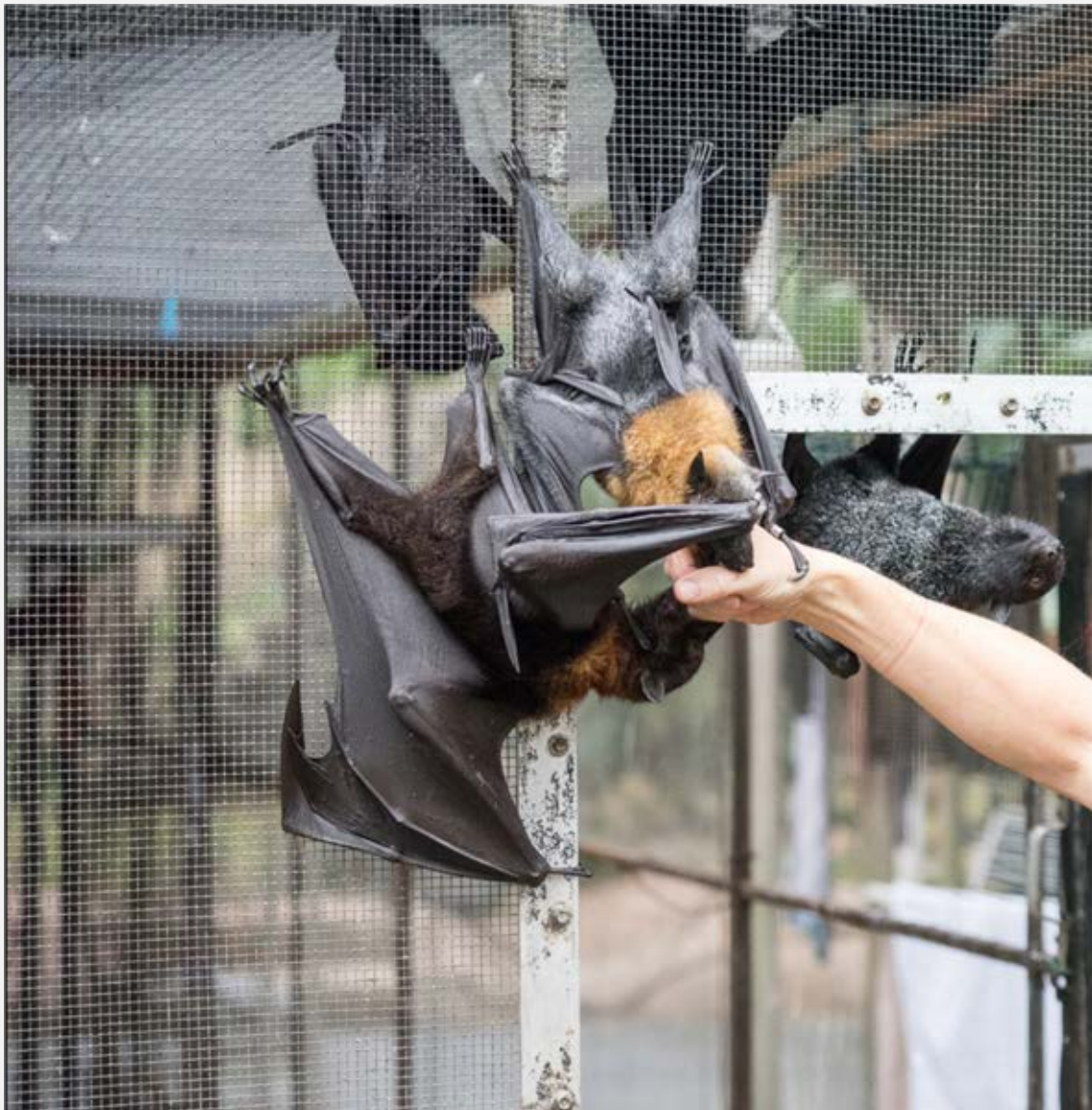


This young Grey-headed Flying-fox has severe fur loss.

38

1 share





Unsuitable gauge wire mesh in aviary. Standard practice is to cover this wire with netting or trellis as it can damage feet and thumbs.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**

1 September 2016 · 🌐

**BIG FUNDRAISING NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER– Please share this post!**

Most of you will be aware that the Clinic runs 100% on donations & volunteers. We have an exceptionally generous donator, who every year donates a generous sum. Well, that donator has made the amazing offer of matching dollar for dollar every cent we raise in donations for September, so we need a donating blitz for September

Every day in September we will be posting, and asking for donations. We have 35,000 followers on Facebook now, and even a few dollars from each follower would make a phenomenal difference. It's also coming into Baby Flying Fox Season, and there is work (and expenses) required in preparing for that.

Please donate, even if only a few dollars. Every cent helps.

Thank you for your support!

You can pay via Paypal <https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr...>

or Via Direct Deposit BSB 034-635 A/C 279071 Australian Bat Clinic

<https://twitter.com/ausbatclinic>

<https://instagram.com/ausbatclinic/>

Photo by Dean Morgan Photography



Fur loss.

Also, this baby is wrapped in synthetic polar fleece, which is non-absorbent.





Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

11 August 2016 · 🌐

Showing off their drinking prowess 😊

Photo by Dean Morgan Photography



Fur loss.

Photos from Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre's post



Baby is wrapped in synthetic polar fleece, which is non-absorbent. Bodily fluids are not absorbed away from skin.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** added a new photo. ...

7 December 2015 · 🌐



Flying-fox on right of photo:  
Membrane has "plastic" texture and contraction as seen in chronic slimy wing.  
3rd fingertip bone is exposed from membrane shrinkage.  
Fur loss on back.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** added a new photo.

7 December 2015 · 🌐



Mother has lost most of her ears.





**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** added a new photo.

3 December 2015 · 🌐



Membrane contracted as seen in chronic slimy wing. Swollen joints.

Wing posture unnatural.







Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

28 November 2015 · 🌐



Snug as a bug in a rug. Under mums wing.

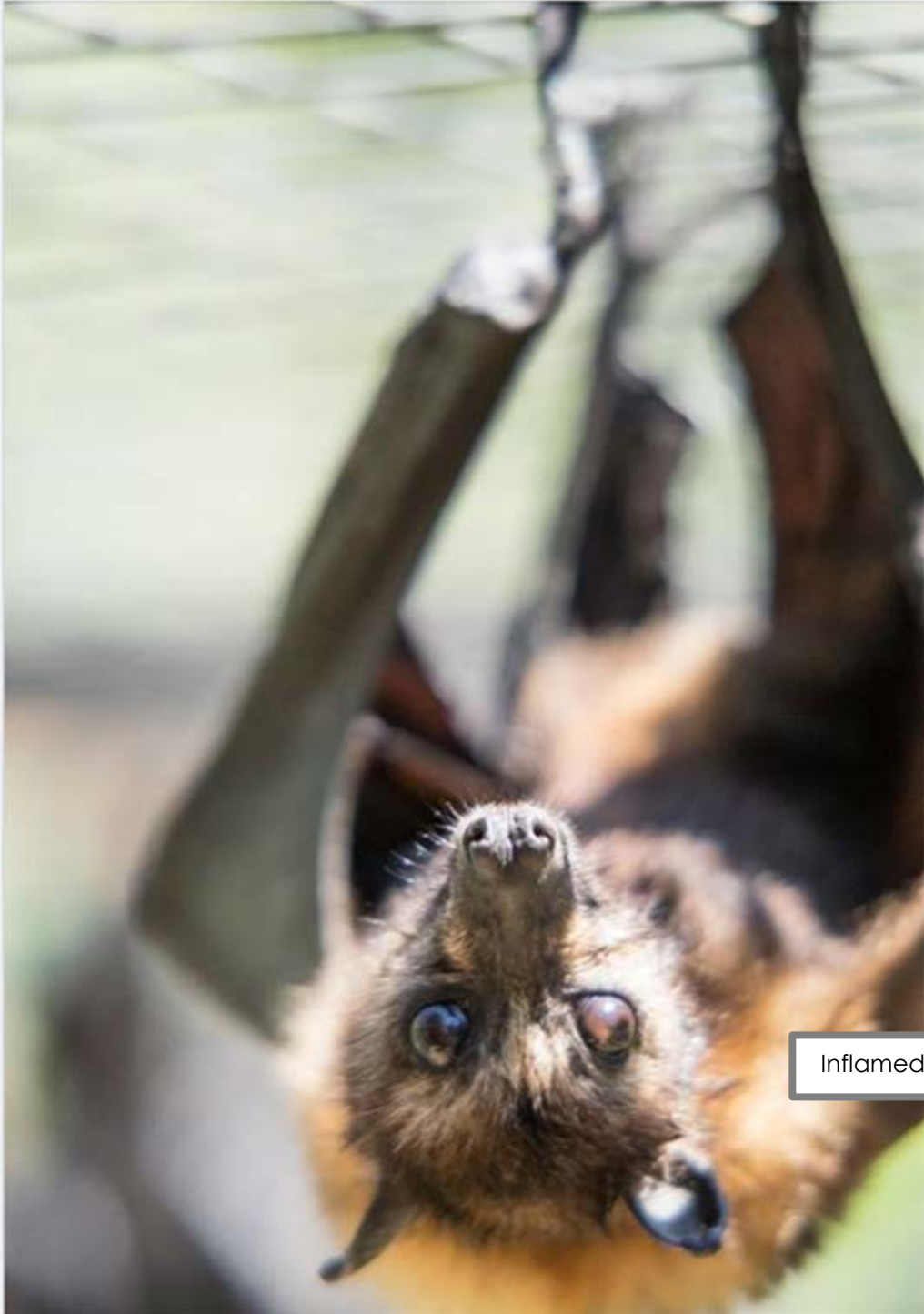


Baby isn't hanging properly on mother; mother's finger joints are swollen, contracted and unable to wrap around baby properly.  
Depigmentation of fur and poor fur and membrane texture (malnutrition).  
Inflamed, tortuous blood vessels on wing.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre** added a new photo.

23 October 2015 · 🌐



Inflamed ear tips.



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**

15 October 2015 · 🌐

...

Someone asked the other day how you tell between a male & female bat. I think this photo demonstrates it...



Severely contracted wing membrane – right finger joints contracted.

Half of right ear missing.  
Poor texture of fur and skin.





Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre added a new photo.

13 October 2015 · 🌐



Wings in unnatural posture.  
Membrane contraction as  
seen in chronic slimy wing.

Finger joints contracted and  
swollen.  
"Pockets" under 5<sup>th</sup> fingers.





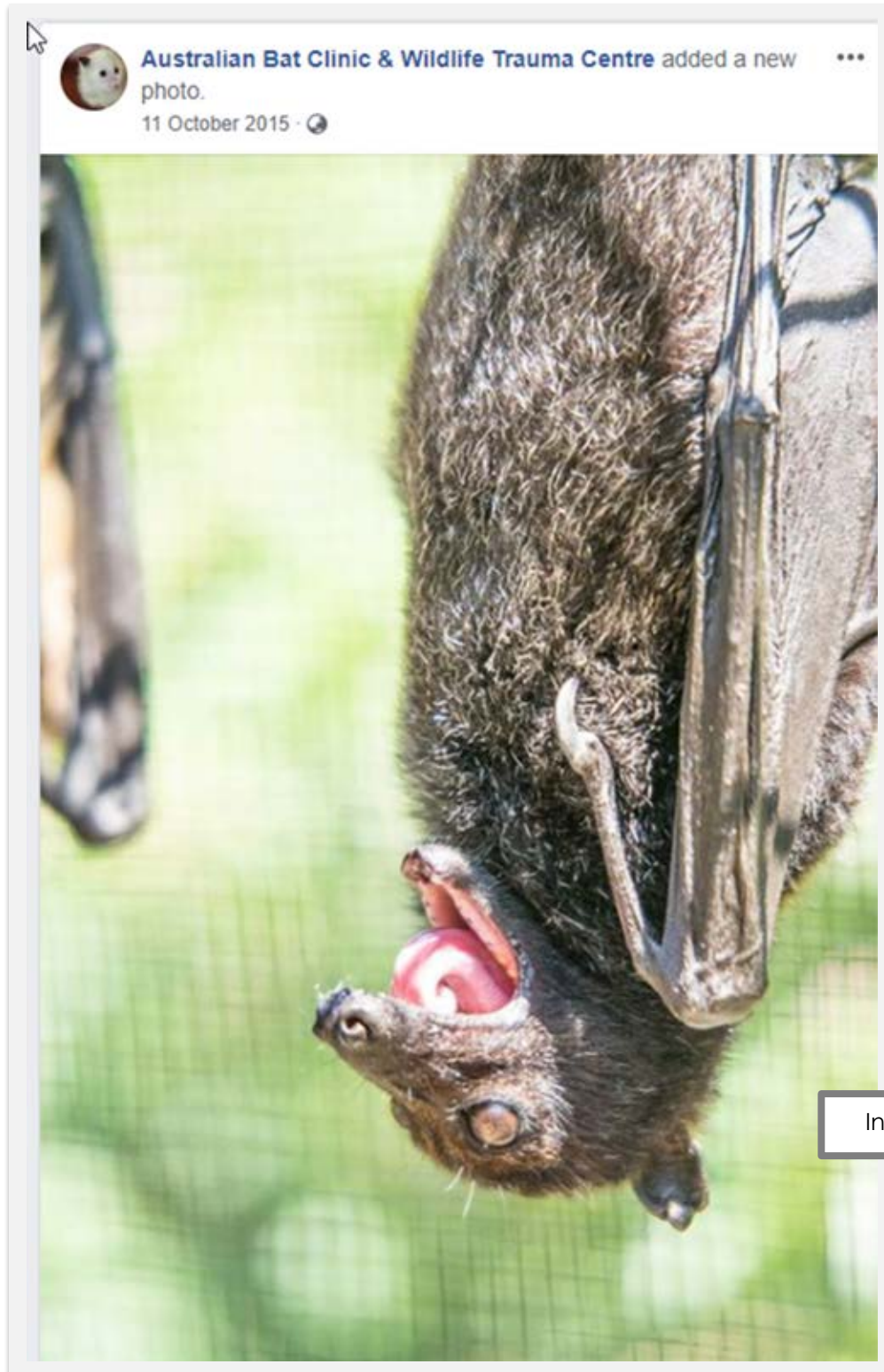
Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre added a new photo.

11 October 2015 · 🌐



Ear tips lost. Active infection.

Both mother and baby have dry, scaly skin and poor fur.









Active slimy wing (grey patches) on membrane between shoulder and wrist on both sides and along 5th fingers (closest to body).

Exposed bone, right 5th fingertip.

Inflamed, tortuous blood vessels.

Missing left ear tip.

Thumbs missing.





Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

12 June 2015 · 🌐

A morning grooming session. Bats are very clean animals, and spend a lot of time grooming themselves.



Membrane infection

Poor fur.



Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

1 June 2015 · 🌐

Always watching...



Half of both ears missing



Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

15 May 2015 · 🌐

Fuzzy Face 😊



Sick-looking bat. Eyes sunken. Dehydrated.

Poor skin and fur.

Thumb bone is very thin (malnutrition when young).



**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**

17 April 2015 · 🌐

This guy looks like he's having an in depth conversation with me about the virtues of being Vegetarian. Smart things Bats 😊

<https://www.paypal.com/au/cgi-bin/webscr...>



Fur loss.

Emaciated (prominent sternum, concave abdomen).





Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

11 March 2015 · 🌐

Another of a young pup clinging to Mum



Mother's ears mostly missing.

Fur coarse and depigmented.





**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**

27 August 2013 · 🌐

2013 Baby season has started our first baby arrived Sat 24th August mother and baby do well also noticed mums and bubs in camps gold coast and sunshine coast



Tania Bishop, Barb Brindley and 153 others

13 comments 38 shares

This post, the very first on ABCWTC's Facebook page in 2013, shows a new mother demonstrating the same range of conditions as those seen in long-term ABCWTC residents removed in 2018.

Contracted wing membrane and joints on left. Distal joint on left 3rd finger contracted, and skin ruptured over joint. 4th finger doubled over. Pocket under 5th finger joint.

Inflamed ears. Fur coarse and depigmented from malnutrition.

This demonstrates that as early as 2013 there were flying-foxes at the ABCWTC in as poor condition as those removed in 2018 (ABCWTC Facebook, 2013).

For reference, this is what a healthy Black Flying-fox looks like:



*Figure 25: Healthy Black Flying-fox*



### 3. Animal Hoarding

Patronek et al (2006) define animal hoarding as:

- failure to provide minimal standards of sanitation, space, nutrition, and veterinary care for the animals;
- inability to recognize the effects of this failure on the welfare of the animals, human members of the household, and the environment;
- obsessive attempts to accumulate or maintain a collection of animals in the face of progressively deteriorating conditions, and
- denial or minimization of problems and living conditions for people and animals.

Animal rescue hoarding is an increasingly recognised problem. In 2011 the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) found that animal rescues and shelters made up one-quarter of all new hoarding cases reported annually (Manning, 2011). Similarly, an Australian RSPCA review published this year found 24% of the 48 animal hoarders studied in NSW were associated with animal rescue networks (Elliot et al). Table 4 defines the criteria used to differentiate between legitimate rescue groups and rescue hoarders (Lockwood, ASPCA).

**Table 4 Legitimate Rescue Groups vs. Rescue Hoarders**

	Rescue Group	Rescue Hoarder	Assessment of ABCWTC against Rescue Hoarder Criteria
<b>Numbers</b>	Known, manageable	Often unknown, overwhelmed	Meets criteria
<b>Intake</b>	Limited, selective, often discouraged	Unlimited, actively seeks new animals	Meets criteria
<b>Placement</b>	Actively seeks to re-home	Usually avoids any placement	Meets criteria
<b>Breeding</b>	Most animals neutered or separated to prevent breeding	Accidental or intentional breeding is common	Meets criteria
<b>Funding</b>	Often diverse sources, usually non-profit	Often self-supported but may have non-profit status or exploit "angels"	Meets criteria
<b>Staff</b>	Adequate, stable, may have paid staff	Inadequate, family, transient volunteers	Meets criteria
<b>Veterinary Care</b>	Adequate to excellent, may have staff or contract	Inadequate, often emergency only - if any	Meets criteria
<b>Offence History</b>	None	Often has previous charges	Meets criteria



Against all the criteria documented as a "Rescue Hoarder", the operations of the former ABCWTC meet all the criteria. This will be demonstrated and explored in detail below.

### **Numbers**

No records for the animals found at ABCWTC have ever been produced. Dr Parry-Jones (Appendix 1) has described over 700 flying-foxes on the property, the lack of record-keeping, and her attempts to create some sort of order at the facility up to 2016. The ABCWTC entry on the Australian Charities Register webpage states that "The ABC treats in excess of 1500 animals each year". Multiple posts on the ABCWTC Facebook page describe having up to 500 bats in care. The Oceans2Earth booklet for paying volunteers at the ABCWTC states that volunteers' project fees go towards "Feeding and caring for up to 400 bats who are looked after daily by staff and volunteers. About 100 of the bats are permanent residents and cannot be released into the wild" (Oceans2Earth). (DES may be able to advise whether this cited 100 had permanent care permits.)

### **Intake and Placement**


Intake has been unlimited, active and unrelated to capacity to care. In 2016, despite being unable to adequately care for the 700-odd flying-foxes already on the property (many identified as being in a poor physical state, unreleasable and requiring veterinary attention), and having her banding license cancelled over ethical and animal welfare concerns (Parry-Jones, Appendix 1), the proprietor of ABCWTC continued to actively acquire more flying-fox orphans to bring into care. In July 2016 she received over 45 Little Red Flying-fox babies rescued from the Mt Ommaney camp in cold weather.

Mt Ommaney is an inner-west suburb of Brisbane, 90km away from ABCWTC on the Gold Coast, and within the rescue zone serviced by Brisbane group Bat Conservation and Rescue Queensland (BCRQ). BCRQ carers were checking the Mt Ommaney camp regularly, however, two ABCWTC-affiliated carers were spending whole nights in the camp and took every live baby rescued to the ABCWTC. BCRQ offered to assist by taking some Little Red Flying-fox babies, as they had many carers and incubators available. However, no babies were transferred to any other group (pers comm, then BCRQ president R. Smethurst).

The story was published in news media (Brisbane Times, Australian Geographic) and the ABCWTC Facebook page posted numerous requests for help and donations.







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4 July 2016 · 🌐


We have had an influx of 45+ Little Red Flying Fox Orphans come in, and need you help. Normally, these guys would have flown north to warmer climates by now, but for some reason, some colonies have hung around. Unfortunately, the Mums are flying away at night in search of food, and leaving the babies in the camp while away (which is normal behaviour). However, as temperatures have been getting so cold overnight, and the babies have been dying or getting hypothermia and falling out of the trees during the night.

We need your support to help us care for these little guys. They are not used to colder temperatures, and require incubators as well as food, and facilities are currently stretched to the limit.

If you can spare any funds, please do. We have over 32,000 followers these days, and even if only 1/3 of you contributed \$2 each, it would make a massive difference. No amount is too small!

Thank you for your support!

You can pay via Paypal <https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr...>  
or Via Direct Deposit BSB 034-635 A/C 279071 Australian Bat Clinic  
<https://twitter.com/ausbatclinic>  
<https://instagram.com/ausbatclinic/>  
Photo by Dean Morgan



In November 2016 the ABCWTC acquired approximately 100 Grey-headed Flying-fox babies, removed from Esk colony. There was some confusion after flying-fox carers received an email about an apparent heat event at Esk on November 11th (despite the temperature being only 38 degrees), but were reassured that ABCWTC carers were on-site and there was no problem (Figure 26). It was later reported that Trish Wimberley had taken 100 Grey-headed Flying-fox babies into care from Esk colony (pers comm L. Robertson).



Flying Fox Carers Australia

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Rachael Smethurst

Great plan Judi. Thankfully not needed as yet. False alarm 😊

Like · Reply · 2y

Leanne Robertson

Judi Wood - Something is in place - I'll pm details and contacts of coordinators when home from work late....

Like · Reply · 2y

Isabelle Gabriel

Hey judi. Completely agree. All the email i received was hse in wsk qld. Patricia needs help. Please call that number

Like · Reply · 2y

Isabelle Gabriel

I cant go cause im stuck at my work.

Like · Reply · 2y

Leanne Robertson

Hit 45 degrees there last year and not bat down....council need to be notified as they are proactive in Somerset now....

Like · Reply · 2y

Isabelle Gabriel

Update.... kathy from rspca on the way to esk. Trish w will contact sammy from bat rescue inc uf there is anymore that can be done

Like · Reply · 2y

2

Leanne Robertson

No panic guys....Camp isn't down....a few bubs have been affected. Trish and Cathy are onto it and so is Council.

Like · Reply · 2y

1

Rachael Smethurst

False alarm guys. Not a heat event.

Like · Reply · 2y

1

Trish Wimberley

Hi guys dont panic yet will let you k now if and when it does happen but all good just a few dead bubs on ground that you would find under any camp at the moment all mums are ok and are parking their kids close by because it is hot but all good so far ..... councils are on board and keeping an eye on the weather and camps so all goods

Like · Reply · 2y

6

Judi Wood

I think it's important we have some guidelines in place for everyone to use in emergency. I doubt this will be an easy

Figure 26: Flying Fox Carers Facebook, 11 Nov 2016.

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By November 16th ABCWTC Facebook announced they had over 200 orphans in care and desperately needed donations.



More Grey-headed Flying-fox babies were removed from the Gympie colony by ABCWTC supporters a few days later. Bat Rescue carers Carmel Givens and Sue Morris were asked to help triage the Gympie arrivals at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital on November 21st. They, and one of the vets on duty, observed that the rescued babies were bright-eyed, noisily calling for their mothers, and few had any significant problems apart from being underweight and mildly dehydrated. One baby was seen to produce typical milk-fed faeces, despite not having been fed any milk by the rescuers – a sign that it had been mother-fed very recently.





Figure 27: Bright-eyed, alert recent rescues.

Pinson reported similar concerns in 2008, following the removal of 300 Grey-headed Flying-fox orphans from Canungra colony by Trish Wimberley and members of Wildcare, describing "Wildcare 'hoons' crashing around in the colony, scaring away mothers", and observing that "many of these babies were superbly hydrated on intake (impossible after supposedly being orphaned many days before)" (Appendix 5). Flying-fox babies that have been alone for an extended period are not bright-eyed, alert and well hydrated; their eyes are small or sunken, they're quiet and lethargic, and their wing membrane is dry and loose.

Concerns over this and other mass removals of babies from colonies led to the drafting of the Protocol for Intervention at Flying-fox Camps during Abandonment or Orphaning Events (2011, Appendix 10). It draws upon research showing that "nursing mothers may leave dependent young alone for periods of up to three days, and hence all unattended dependent young are not necessarily abandoned or orphaned". At the time, government agency restrictions were reportedly placed on wildlife carers removing animals from flying-fox camps, but the power of these seems to have waned over time.





ABCWTC's Facebook page soon announced they had 300 orphans in care and made repeated requests for donations.





No definitive reason was ever given for the need to remove 300 Grey-headed Flying-fox orphans from these colonies. A "starvation event" was suggested at first, then a "mass abandonment". At one point in December 2016, Trish Wimberley informed other care groups that the reason for the "mass abandonment" was a blood parasite, *Theileria*, and that she'd arranged for all three south-east Queensland wildlife hospitals to test for it in any baby Grey-headed Flying-foxes rescued (pers comm T. Wimberley). *Theileria* spp. are tick-borne parasites considered non-pathogenic to Australian wildlife (Wildlife Health Australia). Dozens of baby Grey-headed Flying-foxes were subsequently tested for *Theileria* by at least one south-east Queensland wildlife hospital, but no positive results were found.

The 300 Grey-headed Flying-fox babies acquired in 2016 by the ABCWTC were also sometimes reported as having come from Canungra, along with a young leucistic Grey-headed Flying-fox, who went on to become the Facebook mascot for the ABCWTC, after being variously reported as having been "abandoned by his mother" (Figure 28) or found on the ground at night (Figure 29). ABCWTC Facebook page later reported that his mother was still being seen in the camp (Figure 30).



ABC Gold Coast

13 June 2018 ·

Like Page



### CUTE ALERT!!

Tal'ngay Dha'run is a rare white bat (cute) who will undergo neutering surgery later this week (not cute!).

He gets sunburnt easily and it's not a trait experts want passed on in the gene pool.

So the [Dreamworld Australia](#) vet team, along with vets from the [Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre](#) will perform castration surgery on him on Friday.

The bat was rescued at Canungra in the Gold Coast hinterland in 2016 along with 300 other juvenile bats when his mum abandoned him for an unknown reason. He'll spend the rest of his life in captivity because he's too vulnerable to return to the wild.

Read more here from when he was first rescued:

<http://www.abc.net.au/.../rare-white-flying-fox-rescu.../8171898>

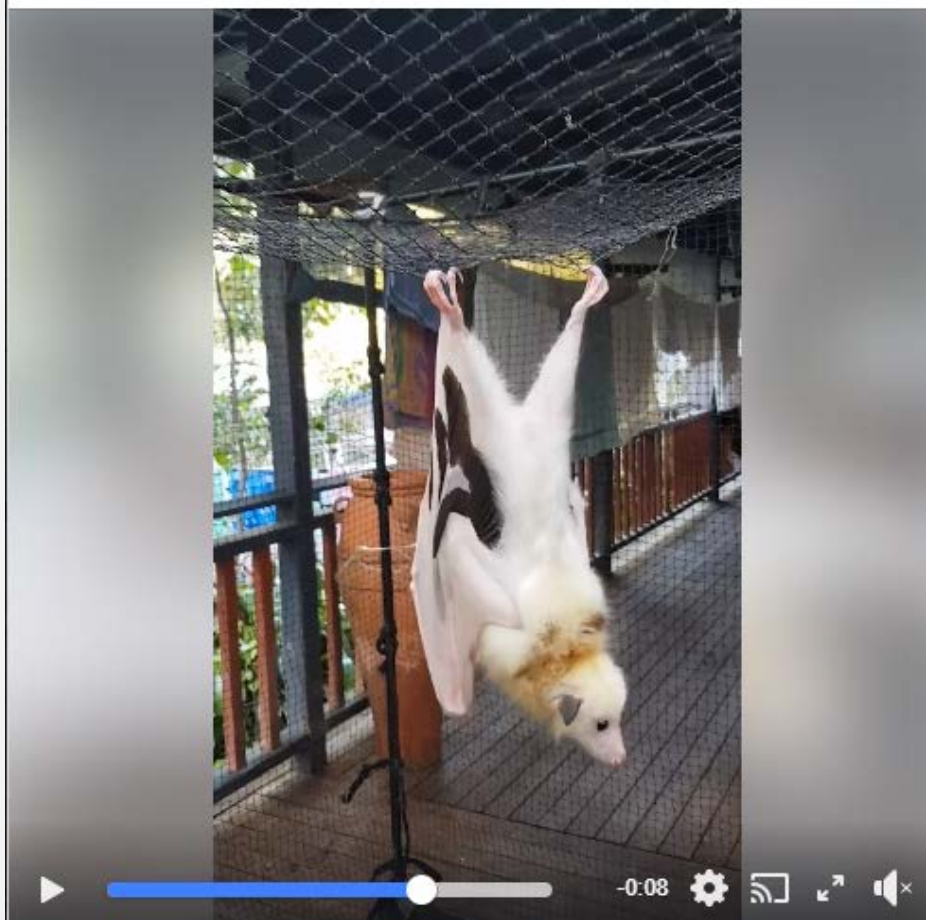


Figure 28: ABC News Gold Coast, 13 June 2018.





PHOTO: The rare white grey-headed flying fox has leucism, which ca

**A rare white fruit bat with serious sunburn is recovering well after being rescued by volunteers in south-east Queensland.**

The grey-headed flying fox has been named Tal'ngay Dha'run, which means 'white wing' in the local Yugambeh Indigenous dialect.

The unique creature was among 300 other juvenile bats saved in a major rescue at Canungra in the Gold Coast hinterland in late November.

Australian Bat Clinic director Trish Wimberley said volunteers had been watching the young bat for about a month when rescuers stumbled across him on the ground.

"They had their headlamps on, they were walking back to the car and they thought 'Oh god, we've left some paper down there on the ground, we'd just better clean that up'," she said.


"As they went over it moved and it was Tal'ngay.

"They picked him up, ran in and said 'We've got the white bat'."

*Figure 29: ABC News Gold Coast, 10 Jan 2017.*







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24 January 2017 · 🌐

TAL'NGAI DHA'RUN - TRIVIA TUESDAY:-

My mother was very protective of me when I was just a pup, cleaning and grooming me every day and opening her wings so I could get some sunshine. I would hold on tight with my sharp little toes and suckling on her breast for the first 3 to 4 weeks of my life when she went out to feed before placing me in a creche tree at night with lots of other little pups. When she went out to feed on her own, we usually start flapping our wings really ha...

See more



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Elias Lindblad

For some reason I thought his mum would be white as well, even though I know the white is a rare mutation for these bats.

Like · Reply · 2y


1



Martha Spalding Mazingo

aw....with his mommy.

Like · Reply · 2y




Debbie Frame-Reed

Do u know what happened to mom? ...

Like · Reply · 2y

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Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre

sorry not starvation in qld not ticking all the boxes we are not sure what happened but at 4 to 6 weeks old pups require top nutrition and if mums cant provide for what ever reason then of course the abandonment issue we managed to rescue around 300 but a lot more actually didnt make it our there sadly Tal'ngai was one of the lucky ones we still see his mum when we check the camps during the hot weather to make sure they are ok

Like · Reply · 2y

8

Figure 30: ABCWTC Facebook post, 24 Jan 2017.

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So, in addition to the 700 flying-foxes in care identified by Dr Parry-Jones in February 2016 (noting that very few were in any fit state to be released), ABCWTC added 45 Little Red Flying-fox babies in July, then another 300 Grey-headed Flying-fox babies in November, along with, presumably, the occasional flying-fox that came into care from a regular rescue. **An establishment identified as having no staff, very few volunteers and which was already overcrowded with bats suffering inadequate care now had over 1000 flying-foxes in care.**

What was the fate of these 300 Grey-headed Flying-fox babies? There is little evidence to suggest that any reports of releases from the ABCWTC are reliable, abundant evidence of flying-foxes not being released from the ABCWTC when they should have been, and a proven deterioration of condition over time of animals kept in captivity at the ABCWTC. Only 74 Grey-headed Flying-foxes were removed in 2018, including 35 long-term residents previously banded in 2015-16.

In the summer of 2017-18, the ABCWTC facilities were already being described as overcrowded, filthy and having very few volunteers. Aviaries were damaged and in need of repairs and flying-foxes on the property had untreated injuries, wing infections and were frantic for food (Roberts, Appendix 3).

Fri 17 Nov 2017

Little Red aviary still a cess pit. 1 chook and 1 duck being repeatedly raped. Trish seems oblivious of this. One rooster being picked on – this ignored too. On Monday 100 spectacled f-fs are coming. She can't look after the ones she already has adequately (Roberts, p 167).


Despite this clearly demonstrated lack of capacity to care, ABCWTC carers drove to Cairns to acquire approximately 100 Spectacled Flying-fox (SFF) orphans. Roberts describes flying-foxes being moved into already overcrowded cages to make way for the Spectacled Flying-foxes:

Mon 20 Nov 2017

Big movements – all front room bats going onto the patio aviary. Those from patio going into release aviary which is now closed off for ?? days. Serious overcrowding in this area. Blacks and GHFFs from LR cage to be added to this. All so 100 Speccies can be added to Trish's collection? (Roberts, p 167).



Three days later ABCWTC Facebook announced the arrival of the SFF orphans, and began urgently fundraising on Facebook, for money to buy items immediately needed, as they were apparently insufficiently equipped for these animals already brought into in care.



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23 November 2017 · 🌐

**PLEASE HELP OUR NEWLY ARRIVED SPECTACLED FLYING FOX ORPHANS:-**

Bat followers may be aware of the plight of our Spectacled Flying Foxes in Cairns. We have been given EHP (Dept. Environment & Heritage Protection) approval to collect and transport Spectacled Flying Fox orphans to the clinic here in Advancetown to relieve the influx on the carers up north. This now equates to the need for funds as we will raise these orphans until they are of creche age and transport them back north to go into soft release at Kuranda.

We are in immediate need of the following items - please, if any locals are willing to lend or donate some these items it would be much appreciated:-

- Nebulisers (4)
- ICU (4)
- Electric Blankets (2)
- Volunteers - must be vaccinated to help feed and unvaccinated can help with everything else  
(Any vaccinated volunteer who currently has other Flying Fox pups species in care are welcome to bring their animals but they must be left in the specified crèche area separate to the Spectacled Flying Foxes and must follow all hygiene protocols in place currently.)

Funds will go toward the following items (will take these as physical donations too) :-

- Washing Powder/Liquid
- Tissues
- Baby Wipes
- F10 disinfectant
- Goat's Milk Formula (eg - Karicare from Birth #1)
- Needles
- Syringes
- Demineralised Water  
(the clinic is in a semi-rural area and this water is preferred for nebulisation and use in formula)
- Latex (for making teats/dummies)
- Floor cleaning products - mops, buckets & cleaners
- Antibacterial gel/hand cleaners
- Paper Towel Rolls
- Toilet Paper
- Meals for Carers


All donations over \$50 will include a thank you certificate from our Spectacled bubs - just state "Spectacled" in PayPal notes. They are all up for sponsorship also, but will organise this once they are settled in.

**PLEASE DONATE VIA THE DONATE BUTTON ( PAYPAL )**  
<https://www.paypal.com/donate/...>




Despite other care groups offering to take SFF babies, none were passed on. Other flying-fox carers challenging this on Facebook were told by an ABCWTC representative that EHP (DES), wildlife hospitals and even local councils had dictated that no Spectacled Flying-foxes should leave the ABCWTC.

1 hour ago · Like · Reply · 1


 **Leanne Robertson**

We've handed out bats to carers every year. Then we get unusual events where we had over 300 greys in last season and followed Aussie Zoo's advice of 'keep them together' due to not knowing why they were abandoned. The Little Reds were kept together as every one of them had pneumonia due to cold event. No one is understanding how important it is to follow EHP guidelines and the fact the Speccies are not endemic to this area. If we want these guys to be protected in the future, we need to be calm, professional and follow instructions set by not only EHP, but Councils and our Wildlife Hospitals we work with. Feel free to call Trish as all relative authorities are in full correspondence often for updates. Not stopping anyone from helping out, we're encouraging it - I'd LOVE some to myself too, but settling for my fill of Speccie love without taking them home. Most don't understand multiples and say everything negative - only 3 criers today which all got cuddled, one sucker and suckee this week which was dealt with immediately and 5 are flying !! Each bat is hand held with a bottle and cleaned, so we provide full tactile service :)




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 **Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
11 January 2018 · 🌐

We are in the news again.



GOLDCOASTBULLETIN.COM.AU  
**3500km trip to rescue 90 baby bats**  
QUICK, to the batmobile!





Roberts reports that around 30 of the Spectacled Flying-fox orphans developed pneumonia at the ABCWTC. Only 65 were returned to Cairns. (Appendix 3, p 161).

A year later, in late 2018, the ABCWTC had been forcibly closed, the organisation no longer held a flying-fox rehabilitation permit and the majority of the flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC had been humanely euthanased. The former ABCWTC proprietor Trish Wimberley was reported to have been seriously unwell and this was one of the reasons frequently cited for the "sudden" deterioration of animal welfare at the ABCWTC in 2018. However despite that, in late November 2018, Trish Wimberley was reported in news media as personally caring for another 30 Spectacled Flying-fox orphans flown down from Cairns to the ABCWTC.

In November 2018, an airlift of 30 Spectacled Flying-fox orphans from Cairns to Brisbane was arranged, paid for and conducted under the permit of another group, Wildlife Rescue Queensland (WRQ). The former proprietor of the ABCWTC, Trish Wimberley, appeared at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital (AZWH) to collect the orphans, against the wishes of WRQ President Byron Cann (pers comm. B. Cann). Flying-fox carer Nikki Holst, who was present at AZWH at the time, records her distress at learning that Trish Wimberley was being given these orphans, when so many of the animals removed from her care were being taken there to be euthanased around the same time (Holst, Appendix 9.4).

Trish Wimberley was then filmed at another individual's house on the Gold Coast by Channel 7, in a news video entitled "Australian Bat Clinic Director has rescued dozens of tiny bats" which stated that she was personally caring for all 30 orphans, who would be in her care until they were driven back to Cairns in her "bat van" (7NEWS video). At this point in time the ABCWTC had no flying-fox rehabilitation permit, the ABCWTC property at Advancetown was for sale, and she had no facility for keeping flying-foxes. The Spectacled Flying-fox orphans were eventually returned to WRQ carers and flown back to Cairns by that organisation as planned (pers comm. B. Cann)



**Bat Rescue Inc.**

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**Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre**  
27 November 2018 · 🌐

**TRISH WIMBERLEY**  
AUSTRALIAN BAT CLINIC DIRECTOR

25,365 Views

**7NEWS Gold Coast**  
27 November 2018 · 🌐

A local wildlife carer has rescued dozens of tiny bats from the state's Far North. As adorable as they look, baby bats can carry disease. If you see one injured...  
[See more](#)

691 reactions · 44 comments · 151 shares

Video link: [Facebook video 7NEWS Gold Coast](#)

These and other historical incidents demonstrate repeated acquisitions of new animals despite being unable to care for those already in captivity at the ABCWTC. They also demonstrate a concerning lack of insight into capacity to care, and refusal to place animals externally to ensure adequate care (also previously reported by Pinson, (Appendix 5). In Appendix 8, Hood & Bressan describe issues with non-compliance during the 2004 Spectacled Flying-fox orphan retrieval, in which orphans destined for other carers were instead kept by Trish Wimberley, and developed problems caused by sub-standard care, until they were able to be removed and rehabilitated by other carers.

### **Breeding**

Flying-foxes were allowed to breed freely at the ABCWTC, including females with only one wing and bats with severe wing membrane loss and deformity. In 2015-16 Dr Parry-Jones noted several mothers with missing wings carrying babies. In 2018, over 20 pregnant Grey-headed Flying-foxes, all with slimy wing and some with severe



membrane constriction and deformity, were removed from the ABCWTC and later gave birth in care. Many of these were recorded as "education bats". Five of the Little Red Flying-foxes removed were carrying babies, including several who had extensive membrane loss, deformity and joint dislocation (see Case Studies, Little Red Flying-foxes). Not only would mating have been painful for these animals, but their disability would have made carrying and caring for a baby difficult and exerted abnormal strain on their bodies.

One cage on the ABCWTC property was known as the "Mums and Bubs" cage. In Dr Parry-Jones' 2016 survey it held 14 mothers with babies, many with wing infections and their sequelae ("constriction", "pockets"). See Table 5. Two other bats in this cage had missing wings.

**Table 5. Mothers with Babies in the "Mums and Bubs" Cage, 2016.**

07387604	Flyer	2nd finger odd angle
07374628	Non-flyer	MO07387566
07379708		good wings lactating baby?
07387567	Non-flyer	fungus/l wing constricted
07387580	Flyer	
07387583	Non-flyer	fungus/l wing constricted
07387584	Flyer	had broken right thumb
07387586	Flyer	
07387591	df	
07387603	Non-flyer	pocket R. Unreleasable
07387608	Non-flyer	pockets L&R
07387609	Flyer	no teeth
07387614	Flyer	healed thumb injury
07387616	Non-flyer	L wing constricted unreleasable



## Funding

The multiple acquisitions of large numbers of orphans described above were followed by multiple fundraising posts on Facebook, in which the ABCWTC also mentioned having a "big donor":

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10 September 2016 · 🌐

DAY 10 of Our SEPTEMBER FUNDRAISING BLITZ- Please share this post!  
This is one of the extremely young orphans that have just come into care, that will require 24 hr care for quite a while....please help him get through...

Most of you will be aware that the Clinic runs 100% on donations & volunteers. We have an exceptionally generous donator, who every year donates a generous sum. Well, that donator has made the amazing offer of matching dollar for dollar every cent we raise in donations for September, so we need a donating blitz for September

Every day in September we will be posting, and asking for donations. We have 35,000 followers on Facebook now, and even a few dollars from each follower would make a phenomenal difference. It's also coming into Baby Flying Fox Season, and there is work (and expenses) required in preparing for that.

Thank you for your support!  
You can pay via Paypal <https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr...>  
or Via Direct Deposit BSB 034-635 A/C 279071 Australian Bat Clinic  
<https://twitter.com/ausbatclinic>  
<https://instagram.com/ausbatclinic/>

ABCWTC financial reports available on the Australian Charities Register webpage state an annual income for the ABCWTC of between \$127,000 and \$132,000 from 2014 to 2017, \$62,060 in 2018 and \$86,009 in 2019.





**Table 6. Annual financial statements ABCWTC**

Year ending	Donation Income	Expenses/Payments	Surplus/Deficit
June 2019	\$86,009	\$67,194	\$18,815
June 2018	\$62,060	\$60,396	\$1,664
June 2017	\$127,162	\$121,532	\$5,630
June 2016	No report		
June 2015	\$127,000	\$147,045	\$-20,045
June 2014	\$132,000	\$157,000	\$-25,000
June 2013	No finance report		

Source: ACNC Charity Register

Despite the ABCWTC being closed in August 2018, and the property sold in December 2018, the ABCWTC Facebook page continues to solicit donations and reported a donation income of \$86,009 and \$67,194 in expenses for the financial year ending June 2019 (ACNC Charity Register). The ABCWTC was in operation at the charity's registered address for only 41 days of that year.

### Staffing

The severe lack of personnel available for the care of flying-foxes at ABCWTC has been documented by Parry-Jones (Appendix 1), Cochrane (Appendix 2), and Roberts (Appendix 3). Roberts has reported being one of only a few regular local volunteers, and the only volunteer present on some days.

Some staffing was also provided by paying international volunteers staying on-site (Oceans2Earth). In her account of conditions at the ABCWTC, Roberts records that many overseas volunteers were unvaccinated, and some had received little education regarding Australian Bat Lyssavirus. She also notes that some overseas volunteers were known to leave early, despite signing up for a specific amount of time (Appendix 3, p 157).

Annual information statements posted by the ABCWTC on the ACNC Charity Register report the facility has had no paid staff and between 51 and 130 volunteers. The latest statement, for the year ending June 2019 claims the ABCWTC has 75 volunteers.

**Table 7. Annual staffing reports ABCWTC**

Year ending	Employees	Volunteers
June 2019	0	75
June 2018	0	90
June 2017	0	95
June 2016	No report submitted	
June 2015	0	130
June 2014	0	51 to 100
June 2013	0	9

Source: ACNC Charity Register



The attrition rate of volunteers at ABCWTC is unusually high. Most wildlife organisations stabilise or grow their volunteer base with a model of care allowing volunteers to care for animals in their own homes. The centre-based model adopted at ABCWTC is clearly more suited to animal rescue hoarder behaviours. There are examples of successful centre-based models, but most volunteer organisations do not have the resources and infrastructure.

### **Veterinary Care**

The overwhelming lack of adequate veterinary care provided to flying-foxes at ABCWTC has been well documented in this report. Paterson states that "hoarders often fail to provide any preventative veterinary care and provide only sporadic other veterinary treatment at best." Joffe et al, in a study of prosecuted hoarding cases in NSW (2005-11) found that in 100% of cases, hoarded animals required treatment for inflammatory, infectious and nutritional diseases. This describes the same range of conditions as those seen in flying-foxes removed from the ABCWTC.

### **Offence History**

Dr Parry-Jones has documented the removal of Trish Wimberley's ABBBS banding license. Contributors have referred to previous complaints and disciplinary actions (Appendices 3, 5, 8). Reports have circulated of sanctions and supervision applied to the activities of the ABCWTC over the years, but the details of any previous disciplinary actions on the part of authorities are confined to their own records.

This demonstration of Lockwood's criteria in action provides sufficient evidence to suggest that animal hoarding has been the root cause of problems of animal care and welfare at the ABCWTC. Over the extended time period that Trish Wimberley has been in operation, it has now become very clear that this report documents a case of animal hoarding on a scale possibly unsurpassed in Australian wildlife care.

The degree of animal suffering inflicted in hoarding situations is severe, and not only because of illness and malnutrition. When multiple animals are kept together for extended periods in conditions of crowding, squalor, poor medical care, and lack of exercise, their suffering is even greater than that of an individual, neglected animal (Patronek 2006). Suffering is magnified in large groups of neglected animals because they may be stressed by aggression from other animals, may have to fight for food or to protect offspring, and are at increased risk of contagious disease and injury.

Roberts and Cochrane describe female flying-foxes being unable to escape aggressive males in mating season and their dependant young screeching in distress (Roberts (8). Fruit was provided in large wire baskets forcing animals to fight to get anything to eat (ABCWTC Facebook post above) and denying access to smaller, younger animals. Pinson and Roberts describe bats receiving injuries from caging.

This diagram, by Patronek, based on the RSPCA's "Five Freedoms", shows the requirements to provide competent care for animals in a population setting and the quality of life achieved for the animals at each level of competency (Animal Welfare for Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium).

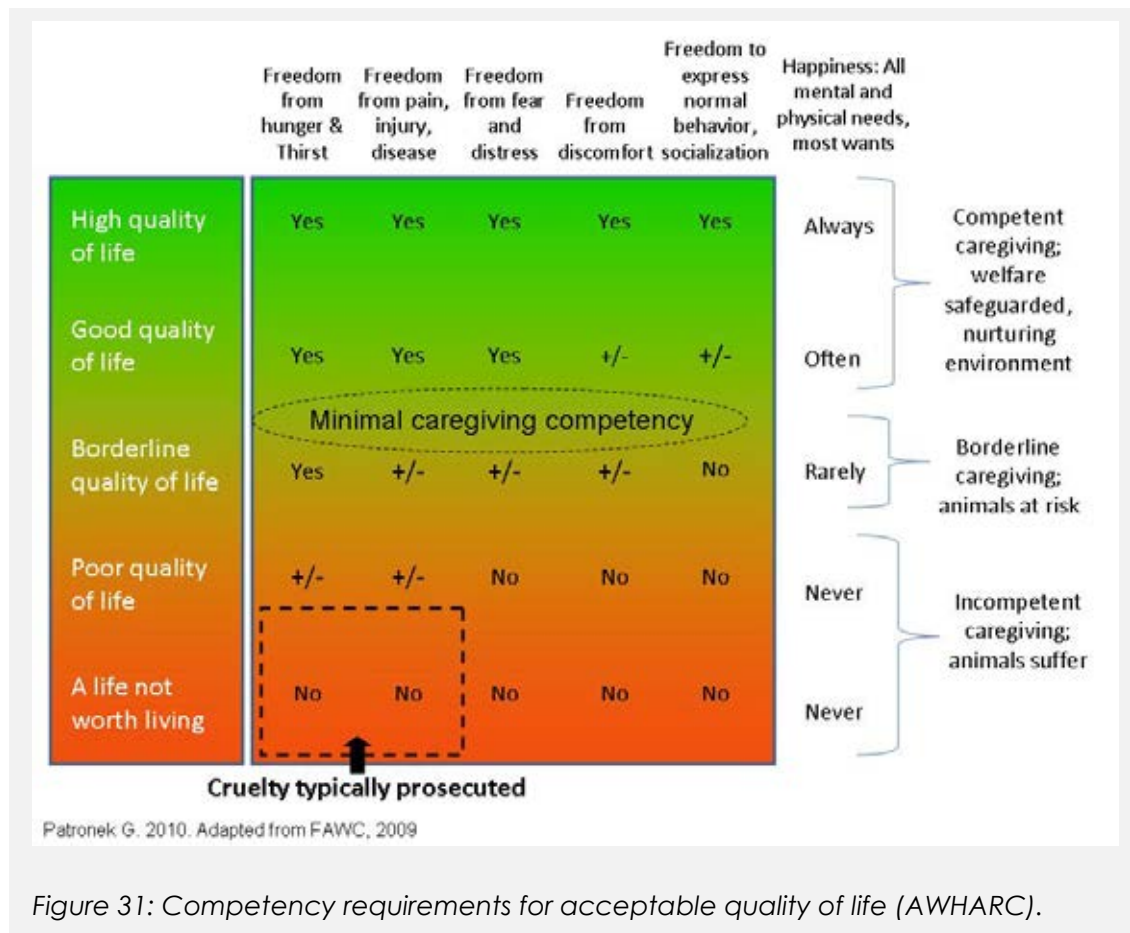


Figure 31: Competency requirements for acceptable quality of life (AWHARC).

Intervention in and future prevention of animal hoarding is recognised as being difficult and complex, and requires an interdisciplinary approach involving multiple agencies including animal welfare, environmental agencies and mental health services (Patronek et al, Paterson, Reinisch). Convincing the relevant agencies of the need to act on hoarding cases can be difficult, particularly when agency responsibilities are fragmented or unclearly defined. Reports may not receive appropriate action because of the hoarder's political or social status (Patronek et al).

One of the characteristics of animal rescue hoarders is the presence of enablers who perpetuate the problem. These may be:

- relatives;
- staff or volunteers;
- public officials;
- other shelters or animal agencies;
- or society at large. (Lockwood).



These enablers may, knowingly or unknowingly, facilitate the hoarding by providing the hoarder with animals. Paterson makes the point that "this type of passive acquisition only fuels the individual's belief that they are 'saving' animals" (730).

Patronek (2007) describes three types of animal hoarding (Table 8). While the categories are not necessarily discrete and may overlap in individuals at different times, they identify the range of behaviours shown by animal hoarders, and are useful for identifying the best approaches to use with different types of offenders, some (eg overwhelmed caregivers) may respond to education but others may not be persuaded by logic or intimidated by legal threats and require prosecution (Patronek 2007).

**Table 8. Three Types of Animal Hoarder**

Overwhelmed caregiver	Rescuer hoarder	Exploiter hoarder
Some awareness, more reality-based	Mission leading to unavoidable compulsion	Tends to have sociopathic characteristics
More passive acquisition	Fear of death	Lacks empathy for people or animals
Problems triggered by change in circumstance	More active vs. passive acquisition	Indifferent to harm caused
Unable to problem-solve effectively	S/he is the only one who can provide care	Rejects outsiders' concerns
Animals are family members	Rescue-followed-by-adoption becomes rescue-only care	Superficial charm and charisma
Likely to be socially isolated	May have extensive network of enablers	Lacks guilt/remorse
Self-esteem linked to role of caregiver	Not as likely to live with the animals	Manipulative and cunning
Fewer issues with authority		Adopts role of expert with need to control

*From Patronek (2007).*

Paterson also notes that animal hoarding has close to a 100% recidivism rate and a legal course of action is often necessary to protect the animals involved (732). Unless there are severe consequences associated with these actions, perpetrators are naturally compelled to continue the behaviour. Lockwood notes that without supervision nearly all hoarders resume their activity, often leaving the area and starting up elsewhere, and that lifetime monitoring is essential.





#### 4. Lack of Supervision by Authorities

Previous complaints have been made to RSPCA and DES about animal welfare concerns at the ABCWTC over many years, and officers from both organisations have visited the premises, along with a number of vets. How any of these failed to notice the dire condition of the large number of animals being held on the premises is unknown. The Australian Veterinary Association's policy is that the veterinarian's first priority should be the welfare of animals involved, and that this includes prevention of further abuse (AVA). Paterson describes veterinarians as being well placed to identify hoarders, but as a first step "must ensure they are not enabling hoarding behaviours" and "be able to differentiate genuine rescue efforts from hoarding situations" (731).

The very fact that there were so many animals on the property at all should have been a cause for concern, or at least investigation. BCRQ in Brisbane services the entire greater Brisbane region and handles an average of 2,000 rescue calls a year. At the time of the closure of ABCWTC in **August 2018, BCRQ's main rehabilitation aviary had 17 bats in care - all potentially viable rehabilitation patients recovering from illness and injury** (as they should be, according to the Code of Practice). All of the previous summer's orphans had already been released (a fate sadly not shared by the 2015 BCRQ orphans sent to the ABCWTC).

It is understandable that those who deal with a wide range of animals, such as environment and animal welfare officers and even vets will not have the same level of awareness regarding particular species that specialised carers do. But when numerous specialists are repeatedly raising the same concerns for over 15 years they should not be ignored. That so many vulnerable native animals suffered needlessly for so long to provide the evidence detailed in this report is not only a tragedy in itself, but reveals a devastating failure of Queensland's current wildlife rehabilitation licensing and animal protection obligations.

### The Costs of Animal Rescue Hoarding

When volunteers of Bat Rescue Inc. retrieved flying-foxes from ABCWTC in August 2018, the costs were separately identified as specific fundraising efforts were required to manage this unexpected influx of animals that doubled our normal operating expenses. Bat Rescue Inc. are generously supported by an Environment Levy Grant from the Sunshine Coast Council, and we have received this support for the last 6 years. We receive \$10,000 per annum to adequately operate our organisation and rely solely on volunteer time, paying for all consumable costs that are significant in caring for wildlife.

Bat Rescue Inc. spent approximately double this in the fiscal year 2018/19 and the audited statements will specify the exact costs of the ABCWTC retrieval including food costs, high protein supplement costs, and fuel and associated administration costs, such as the printing and postage of this report.



We pride ourselves, as a non-profit organisation with deductible gift recipient status, to operate within all the rules and laws that govern an incorporated association. Founded in 2002, as the first dedicated Bat Care organisation in South-East Queensland, we realised the need to dedicate our efforts to bat species as it is a specialised area of wildlife caring that requires:

- volunteers to be rabies vaccinated against Australian Bat Lyssavirus;
- a coordinated effort on a large scale for creche and release of hand-raised orphans;
- specialised facilities in unique locations for flight testing and release of flying-foxes and microbats; a significant amount of public relations work to promote Australian native bats as an important part of the ecosystem.

All the funds we raise go directly into the care of wildlife, and supporting volunteers to perform rescues and rehabilitation with specialised equipment, training, and reimbursement for bat food, formula and supplements to ensure the very best care is provided. We also assist with fuel expenses as many of our team are retirees and simply cannot afford to travel the distances needed to rescue animals and protect members of the public from handling any animals.

The tragic circumstances for the animals at ABCWTC has not only cost a lot in support feeding the animals, but the hidden costs of volunteer hours that are never realised or reimbursed is an even more painful blow to organisations that put their trust in ABCWTC to take care of their animals.

Research into animal hoarding reveals that the hidden costs can be significant and almost impossible to estimate (Patronek et al). RSPCA South Australia reports that a single hoarding case involving 15 animals was calculated to have cost more than \$50,000 (RSPCA). We have tried to give a conservative estimate of the direct costs associated with the ABCWTC retrieval of August 2018 (Table 9). This is estimated at around \$118,827 which is consistent with the findings of Patronek et al that complicated animal hoarding cases can easily cost upwards of \$100,000.



**Table 9. Direct costs of ABCWTC retrieval**

Direct costs of ABCWTC retrieval – August 2018	Unit Cost	Hours	Total
BAT RESCUE INC.			
Food and HPS for Rehabs			\$10,338
Volunteer Rehab Labour	30	2,096	\$62,880
17/12/2018			
08/082018			
Assume 4 volunteers @ 4hr/day			
Volunteer Report Writing	30	300	\$9,000
60 days @ 5 hr/day			
<i>Sub Total</i>			\$82,218
<i>Other organisations</i>			\$36,609
Assume 50% of BR rehab costs			
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>\$118,827</b>

As an additional example however to demonstrate some of the other hidden costs, we have tried to put a conservative estimate to the orphan seasons of 2015-16 when Bat Conservation and Rescue Qld sent their 142 hand-raised animals to ABCWTC for release. We know the fate of some of these orphans still in captivity 3 years later and, given the poor standards of care at ABCWTC from its inception, it can be safely assumed that the majority of these animals were never released back to the wild.

When these costs were totalled, and this represents only a small subset of animals taken to ABCWTC, the wasted direct costs and volunteer labour time is approximately \$930,677. See Table 10.

**Table 10. Example: the hidden costs of hoarding**

Wasted Resources from 2015/16 Bat Season – BCRQ Orphans Case

Direct Costs	Unit Cost	Hours	TOTAL
BCRQ Creche costs of 2015 paid to ABCWTC			\$5,000
Volunteer Labour Costs			
142 orphans x 12 weeks x 2 hrs per day	30	23,856	\$715,680
Banding – assuming 10 mins per bat x 142	30	6	\$852
Food costs for 3 years in captivity at ABCWTC			\$77,745
Assume 0.25kg @ \$2 per kg x 142 bats per day x 365 days x 3 years			
Volunteer Labour Costs	30	4,380	\$131,400
Assume 4 hrs 365 days x 3 years to chop fruit for 142 bats			
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>\$930,677</b>
<i>Combined Costs of 2 examples of hoarding at ABCWTC</i>			<i>\$1,049,504</i>



So, in just a small cohort of the animals sent to ABCWTC over the last 15 years, the estimated hidden and direct costs total over \$1,000,000. The charities website on ABCWTC report that 1,500 animals per year were treated at ABCWTC, and so if this is at all indicative of the true volumes of animals, the real hidden costs would be in the tens of millions. Given the track record of care standards at ABCWTC and the lack of record keeping, it is unlikely many were released back to the wild and can be presumed dead.

Further investigation of volunteer work practices at ABCWTC may reveal that potential exposure of Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) to unvaccinated volunteers has occurred. This could potentially require post-exposure vaccinations for dozens of volunteers, and so the costs could keep rising. It is therefore a very *important lesson to be learnt* from this unfortunate case of animal rescue hoarding, that *preventative measures and early intervention, are money well invested for the community at large.*

## Ongoing Concerns

This report has demonstrated the poor outcomes and animal suffering produced by the practices enacted at the ABCWTC. Over the time that the ABCWTC was in operation, a number of volunteers and even professionals involved in wildlife care have learnt to accept these practices as normal or acceptable, even when they are in conflict with the rules and guidelines the Animal Care and Protection Act and the Code of Practice; Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland.

For example, the Australian Bat Clinic and Wildlife Trauma Centre was situated over 8 km from the nearest wild flying-fox camp (Canungra). It was never a suitable release site for flying-foxes, being over three times the recommended distance from a wild camp.

In March 2019, Orphan Native Animal Rear & Release (ONARR) published in their newsletter that the former operator of the ABCWTC, Trish Wimberley was now operating under their permit, along with two carers who had been involved with ABCWTC for several years, and would now be conducting training for the group. In the same issue, ONARR stated that their new release aviary would be located on the property of one of these carers at Logan Reserve. This property is situated between several flying-fox camps, but the closest is 9km away.

Releases were already being attempted from this Logan property in 2019. An ABBBS banded juvenile was rescued in a nearby suburb, hanging exhausted on a car, one day after being released from this site.

Also in 2019, a Gold Coast bat group reported multiple rescues of juvenile Grey-headed Flying-foxes from a hotel complex in Surfers Paradise. Another carer





previously associated with the ABCWTC lives nearby. DES already has the report of this matter on record.

Many experienced wildlife carers have gone to volunteer at ABCWTC and refused to return (Roberts, Miller, Pinson, Appendix 3, 4 & 5). However, those whose first experience of wildlife or bat care was via ABCWTC are particularly vulnerable to indoctrination in poor practices. Carers and even professionals who have been involved with ABCWTC for any length of time, or who received most of their education on flying-foxes at the premises, will need re-education, particularly away from practices and beliefs that developed in response to the results of substandard care.

It is believed that a significant number of flying-foxes are still in care with previous ABCWTC volunteers. Before the site's closure, concerned carers were known to remove flying-foxes from the property in an attempt to provide them with a better level of care. Many of these carers may now find themselves fearful of seeking veterinary attention or placement for these ex-ABCWTC animals because of the past actions of the ABCWTC proprietor. Such carers have also been negatively impacted by the activities of the ABCWTC and need to be offered support in finding the best outcome for these animals, without fear of repercussions.

Practices surrounding the removal of flying-fox babies from colonies need urgent review and ongoing oversight. Flying-fox young are particularly vulnerable; few other species leave their young unattended together in such large numbers in accessible locations.

Both the letter and the application of the laws designed to protect wildlife in the rehabilitation setting need improvement. Wildlife carers are obliged to adhere to the CoP, on paper, but there are no penalties for non-adherence, and permits continue to be issued and held despite recurrent, serious breaches. If DES is the agency responsible for both the assessment and licensing of wildlife rehabilitators (CoP 2.2) and the administration of the CoP (2.7.1) then why is it not possible for breaches of the latter to be considered in the administration of the former?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the opinion of the authors, and of the management committee of Bat Rescue Inc, that Patricia Wimberley, former owner/operator of ABCWTC be prevented from ever holding a permit, or being enabled by a parent group permit, to have wildlife in her care at any time. This report clearly shows that over a time period spanning 15 years there has been a very poor standard of animal care delivered at ABCWTC, a demonstrated lack of learning from previous poor outcomes, and a disturbing lack of insight and accountability demonstrated for the animal suffering inflicted on the premises.

The purpose of this report is to present the facts and motivate authorities to take action and work cooperatively with agencies, wildlife specialists, prosecutors, other stakeholders and potentially media interests, to ensure the following recommendations are seriously considered:

- acknowledgement that animal rescue hoarding has existed at ABCWTC and that immediate intervention is required to prevent the risk of recidivism;
- prosecution of Trish Wimberley for 238 counts of animal cruelty and breach of duty of care under the Animal Care and Protection Act, 2001;
- removal of all permits currently held by Trish Wimberley, to keep or care for wildlife and a life-time ban imposed on her from ever holding a permit to keep or care for wildlife in the future;
- immediate assessment of any wildlife kept in permanent care by Trish Wimberley to ensure the welfare of these animals;
- review of group permits from organisations that enable Trish Wimberley to operate under their permit (Code of Practice, 17.2);
- remedial action to address the shortcomings of current laws protecting Native Wildlife from acts of animal cruelty as a result of, but not limited to, animal rescue hoarding;
- review of requirements for gaining and retaining wildlife rehabilitation permits;
- establishment of annual reporting requirements for individual wildlife rehabilitators and groups;
- period of amnesty and support for former ABCWTC carers to seek veterinary care or placement for other animals removed from the ABCWTC;
- completion and ratification of the Protocol for Intervention at Flying-fox Camps during Abandonment or Orphaning Events (2011).



Experienced and educated flying-fox carers would also welcome the opportunity for collaboration and knowledge exchange with DES and RSPCA staff, to contribute their knowledge of best-practice standards of flying-fox care, to assist in the development of protocols and to facilitate identification, early intervention and prevention of problems in future.

Improved communication, cooperation and joint problem-solving between responsible wildlife carers and the authorities would be beneficial to all parties, and particularly to our vulnerable native wildlife.





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## APPENDICES

### Reports

1. **Parry-Jones, K. Report on the Bats from the Australian Bat Clinic in 2018.**  
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**9.2 Ridgway T., Carer Statement.**

Terrie Ridgway, Flying-fox carer, education officer, Bat Rescue Inc.

**9.3. Brayley, C., Carer Statement.**

Charmaine Brayley, BAgrSc, DipEd. Flying-fox carer, Bat Rescue Inc.

**9.4. Holst, N., Carer Statement.**

Nikki Holst, Flying-fox carer, Bat Rescue Inc.

**9.5. Friebe, G., Carer Statement.**

Gabrielle Friebe, B.Bus, MBA. Former owner, Batavia Flying Fox Sanctuary.

## Documents

**10. Draft Protocol for Intervention at Flying-fox Camps During Abandonment or Orphaning Events (2011).**





## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Report on the Bats from the Australian Bat Clinic in 2018.**

Dr Kerry Parry-Jones, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney.

## **Report on the Bats from the Australian Bat Clinic in 2018**

Dr Kerry Parry-Jones, School of Life and Environmental Sciences,  
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### **Introduction**

In August 2018 the Australian Bat Clinic (the ABC) was closed by order of the Queensland Department of the Environment and Science (DES). There had been disquiet about the activities at the ABC for some years however the ABC continued operations until 2018.

A number of flying-foxes were confiscated at the ABC at the time of its closure and it was decided that they should be banded for identification. Wild animals can only be banded using Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) bands as part of an ABBBS approved project. I was asked to organise the banding of the flying-foxes that were at ABC as I am an A class bander, and have an ABBBS project dealing with rehabilitated flying-foxes.

On 7th August 2018, one of my R-class banders, Ms Amanda Griffith and I started banding flying-foxes at the ABC. Of the 238 flying-foxes found at the ABC, 97 were found to have been already banded as part of my project. Many of these had been banded by me on various visits to the ABC and some had been banded by the proprietor of the ABC (or three other R-class banders) prior to her having been cancelled as an R-class bander in 2016.

The condition of many of the flying-foxes confiscated at the ABC in 2018 was very poor, they were underweight, they had poor fur quality, most had advanced forms of “slimy wing” eating into their wings and many were missing wings and other parts of their anatomy. Over 40% were euthanased at the first opportunity on veterinary (generally RSPCA) advice. Mortality and morbidity of the remaining flying-foxes taken into care was very high and considerable rehabilitation resources were used in improving their health. Only 25% were able to recover sufficiently to be released.

There has been considerable discussion about the animal welfare conditions that existed at the ABC and how such a situation occurred. This report is an attempt to document what was found at ABC and to suggest ways in which a similar tragedy can be avoided in the future.

### **ABC History**

My involvement with the ABC started in February 2009 when I trained the proprietor to be an R-class bander under my project. The ABC was just starting and the large cages were not yet available so the 500 or so injured and orphan flying-foxes (no-one knew the exact number) were being housed within the house, specifically on a large wired-in verandah, in a new cage to the east of the house, and in the case of small babies in various small incubators in the hospital section of the house. While this was not ideal, cages were being built and I was assured that the ABC would eventually provide the best way of managing large numbers of injured or orphan flying-foxes. The “business” model for the ABC was that injured and orphan flying-foxes would come to the ABC and carers would be rostered on throughout the 24 hours to care for them. While this orphanage-style of care was not the

close contact with a few babies that most carers enjoyed, I was assured that it was the only thing that would work with the large number of flying-foxes coming into care on the Gold Coast.

I banded flying-foxes at the ABC (on 4 occasions between 2009 and 2016) however over that time I lost any belief that the model of care provided by the ABC was effective or humane.

At my first visit in 2009 a total of 71 flying-foxes out of the 500 or so were banded and I expected that these all these flying-foxes, banded and unbanded, would be released in March 2009. My first inkling of future problems was when I was finally given a release date of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010 for them. As the banded flying-foxes were randomly chosen animals living on the verandah, this means that not only the 71 banded animals but none of the 500 or so unbanded animals had been released in over a year and that they had all spent over a year in far from ideal conditions.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2011, I returned to the ABC to train three additional volunteers at the ABC to be R-class banders. The work-load at the ABC was really high and I thought that the additional banders would help the flow through of animals to the release cage. During this visit a total of 79 flying-foxes were banded and placed in the release cage for release. Once again there were an unknown number of flying-foxes at the ABC probably between 400-600 and so it was impossible to handle them all. However, we found two of the supposedly released 2009 banded bats still in the cages.

Very few flying-foxes were reported as being banded and released by the R-class banders in the subsequent years. Over 2012, they reported 143 bandings (including 20 flying-foxes had been reported as released in 2010), in 2013 they reported 17 bandings and 2014 they reported 28 bandings. Considering the large numbers of flying-foxes that were at the ABC, my belief was that a lot of flying-foxes were being released unbanded, or if they were banded (and the ABC received about 500 bands each year to band them), then the records were not being sent to me.

In July 2015 - I visited the ABC to determine why records were not being received despite many assurances that they were being kept and would be sent as soon as possible. I was unable to obtain any records. Once again no-one knew how many flying-foxes were at the ABC nor how many animals were in any of the cages. There were very few volunteers helping and the management of the large numbers of flying-foxes at the ABC was chaotic.

We decided to try and sort out the flying-foxes on the site so an associate and I spent 4 days banding 279 flying-foxes, (approximately three-quarters of the flying-foxes on the premises). We sorted the animals into various cages, putting them in cages in order of release. One of the relatively small cages ("Kids") that did not get much sun housed 120 healthy juvenile and sub-adult flying foxes – orphans raised over the summer of 2014-15, who would normally have been released in the March or April 2015. In the July I assessed nearly all as competent flyers and asked that those flying-foxes should be released within two weeks, directly after the large number of animals that we had sorted into the Release cage had gone. I felt that the proprietor of the ABC was not happy about my activities and didn't approve of me opening the release cage.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016, I returned to the ABC to find that a number of animals that I had separated out to be released were still in captivity. For example 29 of the 120 juvenile flying-foxes that had been reared in 2014/15 and had been scheduled for release in 2015 had not been released and were scattered around various cages. I was only able to assess and /or band approximately half of the bats on the property (353 flying-foxes) in the 4 days I was there so more of that cohort could have been in the cages I hadn't accessed. The animals that I could assess had deteriorated and had wing membrane infection, scarring and constriction. Only 9 of the 29 could still fly. I put those 9 in the release cage. Once again I opened the release cage but the proprietor was not happy about it being open and I had doubts as to whether the release cage would stay open once I had left.

There are two main problems with keeping releasable bats in crowded conditions for extended periods of time. Firstly flying-foxes need space to be able to fly confidently and if they are in overcrowded cages they will not fly and gradually lose their ability to fly. Secondly flying-foxes that don't have access to sunlight or to flying practice develop a condition colloquially called "slimy wing" which is an extremely painful, fungus/bacterial infection of the wing membrane which if untreated constricts the wing tissue and eventually makes them unreleasable. There were a lot of unreleasable flying-foxes on the property in 2016 (perhaps the majority of the animals there) and many of those that I would have had euthanased as a kindness.

In 2016, the organisation of the ABC had become even more chaotic with even fewer volunteers present and signs of considerable financial strain about the property. I asked for the records of the bats banded in the last year and no records were forthcoming. It is totally unethical to band flying-foxes and yet not keep records on the animals carrying the bands. In addition I felt that there were serious animal welfare issues at the ABC and that this was linked to lack of personnel and finance. At the very least at such a large facility, it is imperative that someone knows the number of animals in each cage so that sufficient food could be given to them and so they aren't allowed to be overcrowded. This would be the job of an animal manager, someone who would have the responsibility for the health of individual animals and to make sure that releasable flying-foxes were released and ones that had painful incurable injuries were euthanased. Unfortunately no one was occupying that position in 2015 or 2016. There really needed to be some system involving an organised flow-through of animals so that animals at the same stage were kept in the same cage, and moved through the system to the release cage when they were ready to be released.

I did explain my concerns to the proprietor. However she was not interested, didn't seem to see the problem and her attitude, given the difficulty I had in each visit of getting flying-foxes released, suggested that she really didn't want to release flying-foxes, she didn't want to have fewer animals on the property.

I was very concerned about the functioning of the ABC and decided to inform the ABBBS office that I was removing the R-class banding licence from the proprietor (4<sup>th</sup> March 2016) and to discuss the animal welfare situation with DES (4<sup>th</sup> March 2016).

I had no further contact with the ABC until 2018.

## **ABC Animal Welfare Issues at the ABC in 2018**

### ***a) A high level of morbidity***

A total of 238 flying-foxes were found at the ABC in August 2018.

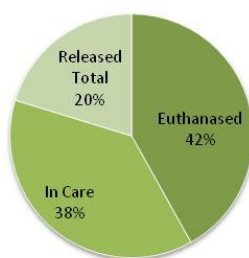


Three species were present:

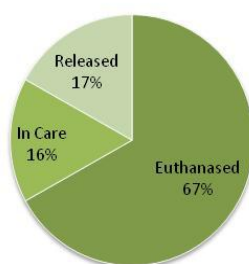
- i. 74 Grey-headed Flying-foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) a species which is considered vulnerable under State and Commonwealth jurisdiction,
- ii 112 Black Flying-foxes (*P. alecto*), and
- iii 52 Little Red Flying-foxes (*P. scapulatus*).

The ABC flying-foxes were assessed by various veterinary surgeons, some from the RSPCA. Many were found to be non-fliers in a permanent state of pain or incurably diseased and these were humanely euthanased within days of being confiscated. Other animals were given extended time to recover and assessed at a later date to give them the best chance of rehabilitation or release. A year after the ABC was closed, some animals are continuing to be rehabilitated but most of the ABC bats have either been euthanased or released. The fates of all the bats found at the ABC in 2018 are given in Figure 1.

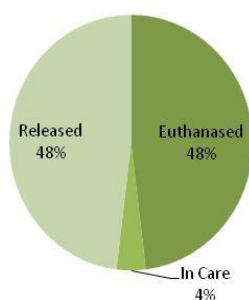
#### Grey-headed Flying-fox



#### Black Flying-foxes



#### Little Red Flying-foxes

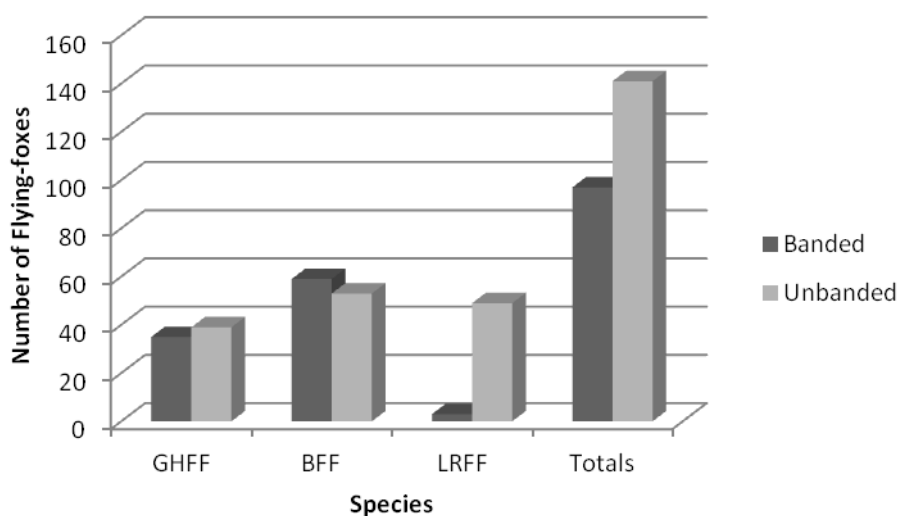


**Figure 1** The fates of the three species of flying-foxes from the ABC.

Rehabilitation societies generally have euthanasia rates for flying-foxes of less than 10% and release rates of over 80%. However the ABC the Grey-headed Flying-foxes and the Little Red Flying-foxes had euthanasia rates of 42% and 48% respectively while the Black Flying-foxes had a lot higher euthanasia rate of 67%.

### ***b) 41% ABC Flying Foxes were Long Term Captives***

Of the 238 flying-foxes at the ABC on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018, ABBBS banding records show 97 flying-foxes had been banded prior to 2018 and 141 were unbanded and so banded in 2018 (Fig. 2).



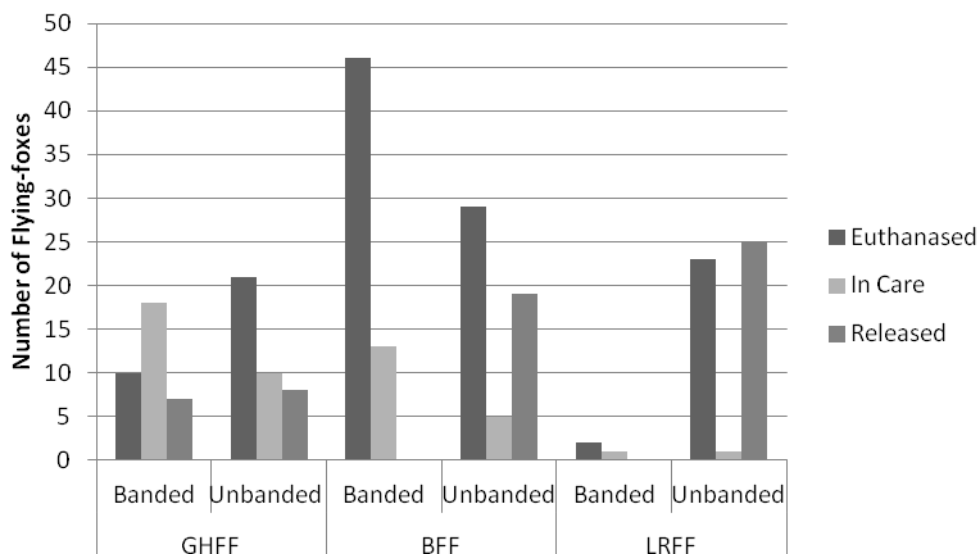
**Figure 2** The number of flying-foxes at the ABC divided into those that were already banded and those that were not banded prior to 7th August 2018.

The banded flying-foxes are all known to have been in captivity since at least 2016. They are all long term captives. On the other hand, the unbanded flying-foxes were a mixed collection of animals, some may have come into care in the 2009-2016 period and been long term captives that escaped banding with hundreds of others that were missed in 2015 and 2016, but others may have come into the ABC between 2016 and 2018.

### ***c) Long-term captives at the ABC had very poor outcomes***

The ABC was a facility that was supposed to care and rehabilitate flying-foxes. If it had really been a place of care then the longer the animals stayed in captivity, the healthier and better cared for they should have been. However the banded flying-foxes were in poor condition in 2018 and most had very poor outcomes.

Figure 3 shows the fates post 2018 of both the banded flying-foxes (the long term captives) and the non-banded flying-foxes, (those with mixed histories).



**Figure 3** The fates of the three species of Flying-fox at the ABC August 2018.

Many of the banded flying-foxes (the long-term captives) had injuries or infections that resulted in their euthanasia. These were animals that had been in captivity at least 2 years and their treatment (to be healed or euthanased) should have been managed by then. Only a few banded Grey-headed Flying-foxes and none of the Black Flying-foxes could be released.

The deleterious effect of the ABC on long term captives is particularly marked with regard to the Black Flying-foxes (Fig 4). They had an overall euthanasia rate of 67% but the ratio of euthanasia, banded to unbanded Black Flying-fox was 78%:55%.



**Figure 4** The Fates in 2018 of Banded and Unbanded Black Flying-foxes from the ABC

**d) Failure of Care at the ABC**

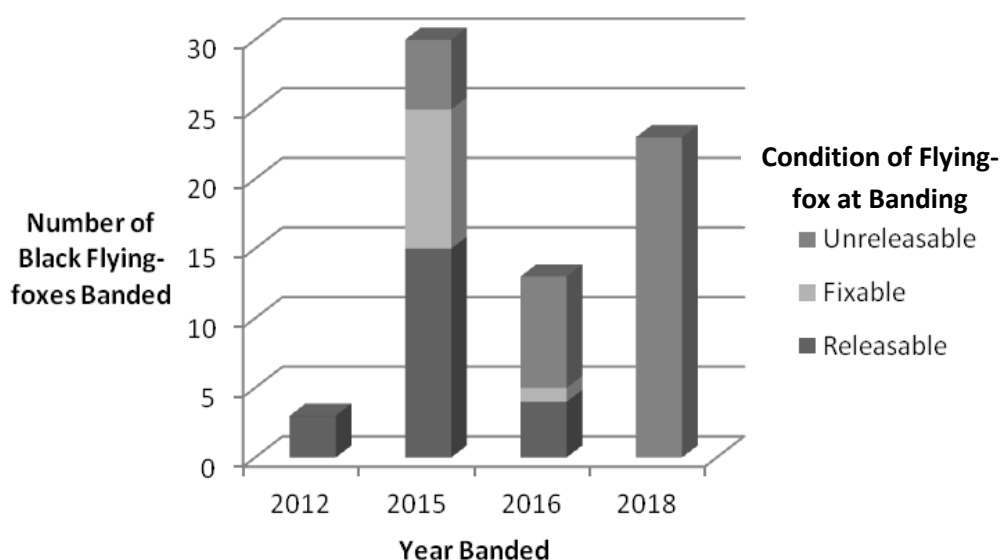
**i. releasable healthy flying-foxes became unreleasable in captivity.**

The lack of care at the ABC was experienced by all three species, I will, however, restrict my comments to the Black Flying-fox as they were the most numerous flying-fox species at the ABC in 2018 and the banded Black Flying-foxes had the highest percentage of euthanasias (78%).

I took notes on the physical condition of each flying-fox I banded in 2015 and 2016 and as part of the ABBBS report I described how each the animal came into care and its fate.

If the banded animals (the long term captives) that were euthanased in 2018 are considered, almost half of them were releasable when they were banded. They could fly, they had good quality wings and there was nothing stopping them being speedily released (Fig 4). However they were kept in captivity until 2018 and by then they were unreleasable.

The length of time they were kept in captivity from when they were banded prior to euthanasia in 2018, is shown in Figure 5 with a summary of their condition at the time of banding.



**Figure 5.** *The year when the Black Flying-foxes that were euthanased in 2018, were banded and their condition at the time of banding.*

The banded Black Flying-foxes that were euthanased in 2018 had been in captivity for at the ABC for at least 6, 3 or 2 years (Fig. 5).

Three of the flying-foxes had been banded in 2012 as juveniles who could fly. 15 fliers were banded in 2015 (14 were juveniles). Four juveniles, who could fly, were banded in 2016. All 22 became unreleasable and were euthanased in 2018.

The change of their condition from releasable to unreleasable can be seen by their histories. For example in 2015, a Black Flying-fox juvenile male in K cage was banded with 07366424. He was an orphan rescued from the Casino heat stress event in November in 2014 and

could fly. He was a flying-fox that should have been released in 2015. However he was still in the ABC cages in February 2016 by then he couldn't fly because he had minor wing fungus and damage. This condition can be treated but his wasn't. He was still at the ABC in 2018, a four-year old, definite non-flier with significant wing damage. He was euthanased.

***ii. the flying-foxes with minor problems were not treated rendering them unreleasable***

There were 11 flying foxes in 2015 and 2016 that had minor injuries or wing infections which made them disinclined to fly (the "fixable" category). They could have been treated but weren't and instead they became unreleasable. Three babies that were born in captivity, were furless from malnutrition related to poor quality mothers' milk. Supplements could have reduced the severity of the condition (Photo 1). However they were non-fliers in 2018 and euthanased.



**Photo 1** – Taken at the ABC on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016, a bald captive born Grey-headed Flying-fox juvenile flying-fox showing signs of poor nutrition from its mother's milk. This is a protein/vitamin B12 deficiency problem and occurs when the mother is malnourished. If the condition isn't rectified the juvenile develops enlarged joints and it cannot fly.

***iii. the seriously damaged and/or infected animals were not treated or euthanased***

Included in Figure 5 are 13 banded Black Flying-foxes that I identified as unreleasable in 2015 and 2016. They were non fliers with injuries and infections that I considered required euthanasia. However they were not put down despite their often painful conditions until after they were confiscated in 2018.

The histories of the "unbanded" 23 Black Flying-foxes banded and euthanased in 2018 are not known (Fig 5). However the type of wing damage exhibited by these animals is consistent with the wing damage exhibited by the banded flying-foxes with a known history of captivity at the ABC. Considering that hundreds of flying-foxes were left unbanded each time I banded at the ABC, the 23 could have been long term residents that escaped banding. Certainly the lack of care that was shown to the 13 banded Black Flying-foxes mentioned above is likely to have been repeated for other flying-foxes.



### **e) Where Are the Rest of the Flying-foxes?**

There is a discrepancy between the number of animals that came to the ABC throughout its history and the number released. There are very few records of banded flying-foxes being released and while this could be poor book-keeping there are also indications that various cohorts of banded animals were not released.

For example in February 2009, 71 juvenile flying-foxes were banded and supposedly released in April 2010. None of the 2009 banding cohort was present in 2018. However 20 of these juveniles (14 Black Flying-foxes and 6 Grey-headed Flying-foxes) were found by my R-banders in 2012 and 18 were released by them (one was euthanased and one was an unreleasable). Were more of this cohort present in the cages in 2012 but weren't found? How many had died? And were any of the 2009 banded flying-foxes released in 2010 when I was told they were?

Similarly there were 120 juvenile flying-foxes both Grey-headed Flying-foxes and Black Flying-foxes banded in K cage in 2015 that should all have been released within a couple of weeks. A release date was never given to me and it seems likely that that cohort was never released. Twenty-nine were found scattered in other cages in 2016. Of the 29 only 9 could fly and these I put them in the release cage in 2016. However five of the nine were still in captivity at the ABC in August 2018 – the implication being that the release cage wasn't kept open once I had left the ABC in 2016. At least another 3 (subsequently found at the ABC in 2018) were in cages that I didn't access in 2016. So a total of 8 flying-foxes from the original 120 survived until 2018. Of these, 5 Black Flying-foxes were euthanased, 1 Grey-headed Flying-fox is still in care, and 1 Black Flying-fox and 1 Grey-headed Flying-foxes were released after rehabilitation. If the 120 flying-foxes were not released by the ABC and only 8 have survived to 2018 where are the remainder of that cohort? And what happened to the 20 that couldn't fly in 2016? None were there in 2018.

In summary there is a lack of accounting for the flying-foxes at the ABC throughout its history. Animals went into the facility but in most cases there is no information on how many went in and what happened to them thereafter. The numbers of known released banded flying-foxes are only a fraction of the number that were banded and there are questions over whether some animals were actually released. There is no information on the unbanded flying-foxes which formed the bulk of the animals that were at the ABC and if it is correct that the ABC accepted 500 incoming flying-foxes each year then the number of animals involved is significant. They may have been released but where are the records? Where are the annual reports? What really happened to them?

### **Recommendations**

The “business model” that the ABC followed for the care, rehabilitation and release of hundreds of flying-foxes has failed. In my opinion centralising the rehabilitation and care of large numbers of flying-foxes is most likely to fail because of the high work-load involved and the cost of such an operation which is generally outside the scope of any group and in particular of any individual. Flying-foxes have high care requirements compared to a lot of native animals. To keep them in good flying condition, they need big uncrowded, sunny, flight cages and they need to be well fed. In a facility that has a large permanent number of

flying-foxes (and this is assuming that there is a reasonable flow through of animals so that none stays for an extended period of time) there needs to be detailed records kept of how many animals are in the facility, which ones are in which cages, their size, weight and condition and how soon each can be released. Considering that animal rehabilitation is generally managed by unpaid volunteers it is unlikely that these basic requirements for a large centralised facility could ever be met. They were definitely not met at the ABC.

1. Approval should not be given for any similar facility to exist unless the Authorities (DES and RSPCA) are convinced that the problems at the ABC will not be repeated and that there are suitable resources available to properly oversee and police the activities of the facility. However in any case there should be restrictions on the numbers of flying-foxes rehabilitated at any one location because of the financial and logistic difficulties in providing adequate food, shelter and veterinary care for them. If large numbers of animals (>100) have to be kept at a particular location (for example after a heat event or prior to release) then this should be acknowledged as a temporary situation, DES should be informed, and the flying-foxes should not be kept for extended periods of time at such a location.
2. The proprietor of the ABC must take responsibility for the problems at the ABC. It was under her control and many of the particular problems faced by flying-foxes at the ABC were the result of her decisions. As a result, strict controls should be placed on her ability to care for native animals. She should never be allowed to manage a facility like the ABC again and she should only be allowed to operate as an animal rehabilitator under the aegis of a reputable native animal rehabilitation society. She should be restricted as to the numbers of animals she can have at any one time, to keep accurate records on them and she should be required to report on her activities on a regular basis to DES and the RSPCA who should inspect her premises regularly.
3. Rehabilitated flying-foxes should be routinely banded with ABBBS bands to identify them once released and detailed records should be kept of ABBBS banded animals. Banding is both a quality control on rehabilitation methods, a way of tracing flying-foxes through the rehabilitation process and has been shown to give considerable information on the movements and survival of these flying-foxes once released.
4. Accurate records must be kept on individual flying-foxes in captivity. Rehabilitators must be made accountable for the animals in their care and must put in an annual report to DES detailing the fates of all their animals and the reasons for any long term captives. There should be no exceptions.
5. Best practice guidelines for the rehabilitation of flying-foxes should be developed by DES and the RSPCA with input from the various rehabilitation societies and wildlife vets. An important point elucidated by this document is that rehabilitators must know how many flying-foxes they are looking after and where these animals are on their property. They should also be fully accountable for "their" animals and know the fate of each.



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Letter of Complaint**

Cheryl Cochrane, Secretary and Bat Coordinator for NRWC (NSW),  
Southern Cross University Animal Ethics Committee 2014-16.

*Report submitted to DES, RSPCA and Biosecurity, April 2018.*

Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018

To Whom it may concern

**Subject: Extreme Welfare concerns regarding Flying Foxes at Australian Bat Clinic, Narrowleaf Road, Advancetown**

I am writing to you with many concerns after a recent visit to the Australian Bat Clinic (ABC) at 118 Narrowleaf Road, Advancetown. **The animals there are in a desperate state of neglect and need your immediate intervention.** The animals need to be properly assessed by a Vet who is experienced with flying foxes, such as the Vets at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital along with the help of experienced vaccinated flying fox handlers.

**No one is monitoring the health or welfare of the animals at ABC.**

Volunteers working there on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 contacted myself regarding a sixteen week old Grey headed flying fox (threatened species) which they found in the release aviary at ABC. He was in a desperate state so they took him to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital. He had a weight of 370 grams with a Forearm measurement of 143mm - Which puts him approximately 60 grams underweight. His fur was in very poor condition indicating long term malnourishment and/or dietary deficiency. His body was full of infection and puss. (Pictured below) Vet diagnosis was; **severe abscessation and multiple wounds to wings and thumbs - hopeless prognosis - euthanased.**



I went there to help on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2018. In the two aviaries I visited I estimate there are around 200 Black, Grey headed and Little Red flying foxes. Volunteers say there are more elsewhere in aviaries/cages etc. I removed another young Grey headed flying fox from there to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital; it had a severe long term fungal infection and has a poor prognosis.

**Many of the bats currently there need immediate euthanasia due to their current state of illness, injury and/or non-viability for rehabilitation and release, this is a breach of Code of Practice 12.2.2 [(Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland (Code of Practice). March 2013. Nature Conservation Service Branch, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection] Referred hereafter as COP.**

Many need treatment for fungal infection and some need to be moved to an appropriate release facility where they can fly and be fed properly to prepare them for release.

I have twenty three years' experience in flying fox rehabilitation and participated in the flying fox working group to produce the NSW Flying Fox Code of Practice. I was also on the Southern Cross University Animal Ethics Committee for two years until March 2016. Following are my concerns and observations after visiting ABC.

### **The animals**

- There are three species there ranging in ages from juveniles to adults of both sexes.
- Many have extensive injuries and wing fungus due to poor air circulation and lack of sunlight.
- Many have large sections of their wings rotted away and bones protruding due long term fungus infection.
- Some are banded so I assume previously they were considered releasable. (see photos below).



**Photo above shows very little wing still in existence and damaged and exposed flesh/membrane, this would be extremely painful, and this amount of membrane loss would render this flying fox unable to fly.**

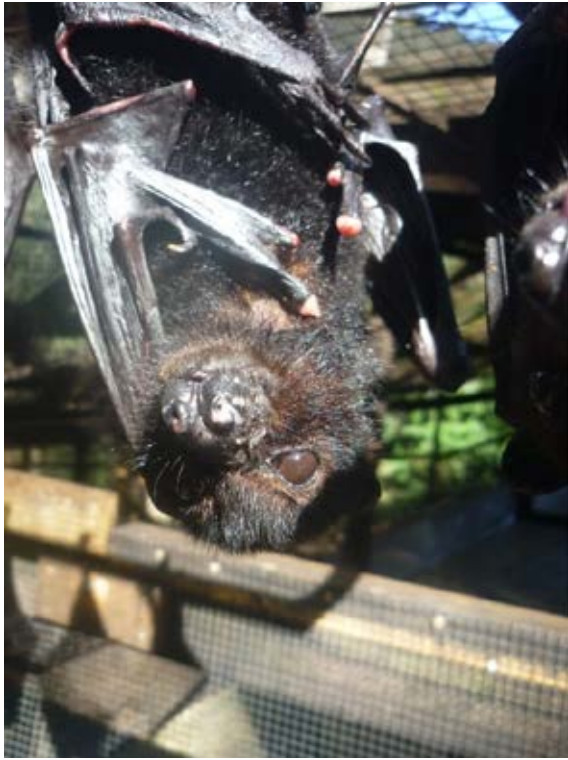




Wing tip has exposed bone, Knuckle joint has exposed bone on both bone ends. Due to these injuries, the finger bones are positioned unnaturally, it is red, inflamed and infected. Its right ear (what is left of it) is infected and raw on the edge. These injuries would be inflicting extreme discomfort.



These wings are being held in a very unnatural position. There are multiple exposed fingerbones visible which are red, inflamed and infected.



The flying fox pictured above has numerous areas of infection, exposed bones, missing finger bones with raw edges. The wings are held in very unnatural positions. This animal would be in extreme discomfort and pain.

Please note the photos of injuries above – most of these injuries are historical (as in not recent) with many such injuries likely to have occurred weeks or even months ago and continue to be untreated. Many of these injuries would be extremely painful and represent long term cruelty. There are many more animals in these cages displaying similar injuries along with many cases of fungal infection. They are all long term consequences of being left undiagnosed and untreated.

- It is breeding time at present and the males are very sexually active in the aviaries which will mean more babies born in captivity come September.
- Volunteers also report finding dead animals in the aviaries often when they arrive.
- Is there a register of animals in care as per the Code of Practice 16.2.1?

### Housing

- None of the housing meets the standards in the COP 10.3.2. The aviaries are massively overcrowded, dilapidated, filthy and totally unsuitable for rehabilitating flying foxes.
- Bats are unable to fly in the release aviary due to insufficient size.
- Roof wire is unsuitable, wrong size and gauge.
- Very little sunlight enters the release aviary due to the design of the structure and debris accumulated on the roof wire. (see picture below)



- Hospital cages (stackable baskets measuring 30cm x 40cm) on laundry trolleys are less than half the size required in the Code of Practice Page 26, and contain two bats in most. This is also not conducive to restful rehabilitation. (see picture below)



- Ducks and chooks are housed in both aviaries with the idea they will clean up food spats and dropped fruit from the bats.
- One aviary is hexagonal with the roof pitch in the middle approximately five metres high, half the roof is fine wire the rest colour bond. The is no way for bats to go under cover in excessive heat or heavy rain as they have no structure to hang from under the colour bond roof and cannot get purchase on a solid structure like colourbond.
- Due to the roof height it would be impossible to monitor their condition and catching them would be extremely difficult and hazardous to volunteers.



## Food

- Insufficient food is fed to the bats, they receive no High Protein supplement on their fruit only a sprinkling of Di-vetelact which is a low lactose milk powder and has no nutrition for bats. Fruit is not fresh and is served in mesh baskets which the bats could easily become entangled in. Breach of COP 11.2.1
- Some fruit is fed whole which is unsuitable for young bats.
- Little Red flying foxes are nectar feeders but are only being fed fruit. Breach of COP 11.3.3
- There are no facilities for cleaning feed dishes, so they are just hosed off on the driveway.
- Food is prepared early morning and stored uncovered in a shed all day without refrigeration. (See photo below)



## Volunteers

- There seem to be very few of them.
- There is no sign in/sign out register
- Getting the jobs done is very laborious due to lack of equipment, not even a plug for the sink. Water has to be carried some distance by hand as there is no tap at one aviary.
- Working in the aviaries is generally hazardous due to the muck on the floor.
- Older volunteers have to walk down steep slopes as there are no steps, its slippery in wet weather.
- There doesn't appear to be any monitoring of volunteers to see if they are currently vaccinated against rabies.
- **Does the operator have Public Liability and Voluntary Workers insurance?**

## Release of Flying Foxes at this property

Of further grave concern is how unsuitable this location is for the release of hand reared juveniles. The nearest camp, being Canungra is over 8 kilometres away and has a huge mountain range in the way and is not always occupied. All other known release sites in Australia are usually within sight and sound of an occupied camp. Most being within a 2 kilometre range or less. I understand this has been an ongoing practice from this property for many years.

Finally it was really surprising and distressing that neglect of animals on this scale could be allowed to happen. Regulations are far tighter in NSW. I visited ABC approximately ten years ago and the level of care then was very poor but there were not as many animals there. It's clear to me now that the operator of this facility is not a rehabilitator but an animal hoarder.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information. I can supply original photos should you require them.

I await your response.

Cheryl Cochran

Bat Coordinator & Secretary, Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc

Dorrroughby NSW 2480



## APPENDIX 3

### Report on Flying-foxes

Ilona Roberts, RN, BA, Cert Animal Care, Flying-fox carer, NSW.

*Report submitted to DES, RSPCA and Biosecurity, April 2018.*

Report on flying-fox clinic  
The Australian Bat Clinic  
Narrowleaf Rd Qld 4211  
July 2017 – March/April 2018

Introduction

My name is Ilona Roberts. I live in Tumbulghum NSW. I am a retired R.N.; hold a certificate in Animal Care from Sydney Technical College (as it was then known). I worked as a zookeeper (Australian section, nocturnal house) at Taronga Zoo in 1976 prior to commencing part time study at Macquarie University in 1977 (graduated B.A. 1984). I wish this information to be treated as confidential and my name not revealed to anyone connected to the Australian Bat Clinic.

I have been involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and raising and release of flying-foxes (as well as other native fauna) since 2002. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my principal mentors over the years: Robyn Gough, sadly no longer with us, whose knowledge of flying-foxes and standard of care were second to none; Jacquie Maisie and Cheryl Cochran. They taught me not only the principles of care of flying-foxes and microbats but how to do it in a way that allowed the animals to flourish while in care, with the greatest chance of survival after release.

Writing this report is difficult, because Trish Wimberley, who controls all activities at the Australian Bat Clinic (ABC) was also a great help to me when I first started caring for flying-foxes and microbats. For some time Trish has had to deal with significant financial, personal and health problems. Because of this, I feel that I am betraying a friendship. However if I say nothing of what I have seen over the past 10 months, the betrayal of hundreds of flying-foxes will lie far more heavily on my conscience. I don't doubt that Trish loves the bats in her care. However the responsibility of taking on so many animals (+/- 300) is huge. I believe that there is a significant level of denial happening, a refusal to accept that the burden is too great.

I have been travelling to the ABC each week, sometimes twice a week, since July 2017, a round trip of approx. 120 km; an hour to an hour and a half each way.

That Trish is knowledgeable on the subject of chiroptera is undeniable and she has worked hard to help improve the public's perception of these persecuted animals. Despite her extensive knowledge of flying-fox care many of her ideas and practices are not without controversy and are not universally accepted by other f-f carer groups. Some of her procedures and practices (e.g. extensive iv infusion therapy for baby f-fs) are contested by rehabilitators who are equally knowledgeable but possibly less

charismatic or articulate. I always spoke up in her defence when derogatory remarks were made about her standards of care. Since working at the ABC as a volunteer, however, I can no longer do so.

Trish is also a person of considerable influence and renown within the f-f/bat community; she is a member of an expert group of co-convenors within the Australasian Bat Society (ABS). She is apparently well regarded by the Qld RSPCA locally and with QPWS.

I wonder though, if any person from the above-mentioned groups (ABS, RSPCA, QPWS), has visited the ABC during the past 18 months? And of those who may have done so, how many are competent to assess the health of a flying-fox? Or the condition of the aviaries?

I am aware that Trish has had to face many setbacks involving equipment and maintenance of the property. The massive flooding which hit the Tweed in March/April 2017, also hit the Gold Coast hinterland, including the property of the Australian Bat Clinic. Significant damage to equipment and flooding of aviaries and parts of the main building ensued. Given such adversity and the apparent lack of funding to effect necessary repairs, surely the sensible thing would be to cut back on the numbers of animals taken into care. Since I have been there, this has not happened and flying-foxes continue to be held in aviaries and cages which I consider to be overcrowded and poorly maintained, or not maintained at all.

In November 2017 approximately 100 spectacled Flying-fox infants from Cairns were taken in, needing to be accommodated separately. There was a massive shifting around of f-fs from aviary to aviary, exacerbating the aforementioned overcrowding.

Before two friends and I went to the ABC in June 2017, I had not seen Trish for several years, except for a couple of workshops on flying-fox care. Much of the damage caused in March/April by the flood was in evidence. We spent the day chopping fruit; no one else was there to do it. My friends and I were shocked by the condition of the aviaries and of the bats within them. We saw bats with slimy wing, wing injuries and fungal infections in the aviaries; **we saw them crawling around on the concrete amongst urine and faeces, after spats and pieces of dropped fruit. What shocked us was that this behaviour was not seen as aberrant.** Neither friend was willing to return. I felt differently, believing that both the animals and Trish needed all the help they could get. Now I doubt that my efforts were of use to the animals in the long run. I probably helped a situation to continue which should be dealt with by closing the facility permanently.

My observations follow:

### Volunteers

Most of the work of food preparation, cleaning of food and water containers is done by volunteers. Given the conditions under which they are obliged to work, this is quite arduous. Many volunteers come from overseas or interstate and many are unvaccinated and therefore unable to enter aviaries or to handle f-fs. I had to explain to one unvaccinated volunteer who had gone into an aviary why she shouldn't be there. She had no understanding of the consequences for her or the bat should she be bitten or scratched; she had only the vaguest knowledge of ABLV.

Overseas volunteers sign up for specific amounts of time but I know of several who have left early because of the condition, either of their accommodation or of the f-f enclosures and what happens within them or for personal reasons.

Of the regular volunteers like myself, there are only a few and likely to become fewer.

### Aviaries

- Little Red aviary
- Release aviary
- Patio aviary
- Behind house aviary 1
- Behind house aviary 2

### Little Red aviary:

Made from 24 demountable wire panels, is roughly circular and rising to a height of approx. 5m in centre. Each panel approx. 1.2m wide. Wire panels cover half of the roof, aluminium panels the rest. No footholds anywhere under the aluminium panels so nowhere for f-fs to hang. In inclement weather they are obliged to remain hanging exposed to the elements on the wire of the rest of the roof or from the food trays or the wire on the side panels. No ropes or branches have been supplied, nor are there any hessian bags, towels or polar fleece to hang from. (Similarly in the other aviaries.) There is no enrichment like branches with native fruits or blossoms, nor are there branches or boughs from native trees from which to hang. Occasionally a volunteer will bring in branches, but because of the height of the roof beams, it is virtually impossible to put them anywhere but on the side panels of this aviary.

I have no idea how one would retrieve an ailing f-f hanging high in the middle of the roof of this aviary.

The floor is dirt. Apparently at one time this was raked out regularly and fresh leaf litter or bark was put down. Since I have been there, this has not happened. The area turns into a quagmire when it rains and gumboots are needed to work in there. The stench is almost overpowering during wet weather. To complicate matters, two hens with chickens were installed, some months ago, along with the rooster who sired them. The chickens have since grown; initially there were 12 but 6 seemed to have perished and the rooster was ejected at some stage.

**What I found particularly disturbing was the sight of young GHFF or Alecto flying-foxes crawling through the muck on the aviary floor to get to spats and pieces of dropped fruit. This was during several weeks when they had been taken from other aviaries and put in with the Little Reds. They had to compete with the chooks too. GHFF and Black individuals also crawled through the muck to eat food I had put down for the chickens. I estimated b/w 60-80 animals. I was aware that the aviary was overcrowded, (as are all of the aviaries) which leads to bullying; the subordinate animals are kept from the food trays and go to the ground to find fallen fruit. I have never seen this behaviour in aviaries belonging to other flying-fox carer groups. After some weeks these blacks and GHFFs were moved to another aviary. At the time of writing, the LRFFs are the only ones not suffering over-crowding. *(April 2018: this situation again changed; around 20-25 GHFF and Alectos in with LRFFs)***

To clean this aviary is physically impossible at this stage because the layers of debris are so deep that it would require days of serious digging by people with strong backs and arms.

The poultry are fed by volunteers like me, who provide food at our own expense. Someone put in a small dog kennel and they roosted on top of that until I rigged up an extra roost for them. Another volunteer and I supply straw for the inside of the kennel because they lay eggs there. We strew the surrounding ground with straw as well. There are three of us who supply these chooks with proper food otherwise all they would have to eat would be spats. *(April 2018: since writing this I understand that there is now some poultry food at the main house. Also sometime during March, when Trish was hospitalised, all the chickens were ejected from the aviary by Trish's son Jai. Two were hiding in the kennel and were overlooked and are now the only ones in there. And the only ones safe from harassment by the several roosters wandering at large and from predation by the resident lace-monitors and carpet pythons.)*

Initially to clean the food trays I would remove them and hose them with a high power hose which serviced that aviary. That hose is no longer operational so food and water containers for bats and chooks are carried up onto the driveway outside the food prep area. There is no hot water to clean anything in any areas outside the house itself.



### Release aviary:

This is a tiered construction, from what I can see on two or three levels, but the f-fs tend to remain at the highest level, closest to where the fruit is chopped. The floor of the top level is rough concrete at one end and dirt at the other, which means that at least the concreted area can be hosed off. A gate at the end nearest the drive is intermittently opened, so that “released” animals can exit. There is a sink and an area to store crates and baskets etc next to the cool room, which has not operated since I have been going there. I suspect that it was a casualty of the flooding and there have been insufficient funds to fix it.

At night the (8 – now 7, one having disappeared during March) ducks are locked into this area, for reasons which escape me, since it is anything but predator-proof. The free ranging hens and roosters just have to find places to sleep outside.

**Flying-foxes are free to leave from this aviary but where do they go? Many are hand-raised and the nearest f-f colony is Canungra, several kilometres away. And how would a naïve hand-raised f-f know where to go or how to get there or to any other camp? Who on earth authorised this place as an official release site? In NSW release sites are *always* located within sight and sound of existing flying-fox camps and there are specific procedures followed when releasing juveniles. These sites have release aviaries in situ and when juveniles are ready, they are brought to the aviaries on allocated dates by their carers. They are fed and monitored by volunteers until it is time to let them out to join the wild f-fs. Food is supplied for varying amounts of time post release, until volunteers are confident the animals are coping in the wild. Rehabilitated adult animals are *always* taken to the camps closest to where they were rescued and released into those camps. I think there are b/w 100-130 f-fs in this “release” aviary. When I first came as a volunteer, I noted many of the “released” f-fs spent time in the trees outside the aviary but came inside at feed times. I think many don’t fly off because they are physically incapable of doing so.**

Which brings me to another problem; I have seen injuries in this aviary, on the wings and finger/arm bones of flying foxes, who could no more fly away than I could. And these injuries do not appear to be healing. This means that they are in danger from the various predators in the area. I believe that they are not being treated. How could they be? Even the animals remaining in the aviary are not going to allow themselves to be handled and dosed with drugs or to have creams etc applied, daily or b.i.d. Even if this were possible, such creams would be immediately licked off without some kind of restraint. But since I am there only one or two days p.w. and not during the evening when such treatment might be given, I can’t prove that it isn’t.

### Patio aviary

Holding around 30 bats. Comfortably it would hold no more than 10. There is a blue plastic tarpaulin over the aviary; this is its only protection from the weather. There appears to have been an attempt to erect plastic lattice for the bats to hang at some stage, but it is falling down, although some of the bats do hang from it. It would probably only take an hour or so and a couple of people to fix this, but with so few volunteers, only the basic work of chopping fruit, cleaning feed trays, water buckets and distributing apple/mango juice is carried out before the fruit is distributed in the afternoons.

*(April 2018: flying-foxes from this aviary have been removed to the release aviary and the LR aviary. At present it holds a couple of long-term non-releasable f-fs)*

The ground beneath this aviary at least can be hosed so food spats and urine/faeces can be removed.

#### Behind house aviary 1:

Divided at present (approx. Nov/Dec–March) into Mums-and-bubs at one end and at the other, juvenile/sub-adults in care with one of the volunteers who has been involved with care of the spectacled f-f babies. This aviary is approx. 5-6m long.

Approximately 40 Black and GHFFs are in the mums and bubs end, including infants. These animals do get a food boost in the form of smoothies consisting of powdered baby formula, (which is sometimes substituted by Divetelact, in my opinion an inappropriate milk formula) apple and mango juice and water. At feed times I have seen bullying, which again means more timid individuals go to the ground after spats or dropped pieces of fruit. Since the floor of this aviary is also dirt and since it is virtually impossible to rake out, the hygiene implications should be obvious.

Two or three young f-fs from the mums and bubs end whose mothers seemed not to have sufficient milk or for some reason were neglecting them were removed and taken into care and eventually released into the juvenile 1/3 of the aviary. These bats at least have a polar fleece blanket hanging in the aviary, which means they are able to hide or hang from it.

The floor here is also dirt and cleaning presents the same problems. At one stage a duck was living here too; its mate had died from a tick, for which I believe no veterinary treatment was sought. The other 5 (Indian runner) ducks either attacked this individual or mated with it; the result was a severe leg injury, requiring removal from the others until healed. She was successfully reintegrated after about 5 weeks. *(April 2018: Unfortunately after a few weeks one of these ducks went missing, so there are only 5 of these remaining)* I mention her because we had a problem of bats trying to eat her food. This we solved by putting her dish under a cover, out of reach of the f-fs. The poultry food which seemed to be so attractive to the bats has molasses in it so

maybe this is what they could smell. But is it so attractive because their nutritional needs are not met?

At one point the juveniles were removed from this 1/3 section and installed with the mums and bubs. Approximately 30 GHFF and Alecto f-fs were put in there. I overheard someone explaining to a new volunteer that this was “death row”. Apparently these unreleasable bats were taken by researchers from a university, to have blood taken (and what else done to them?) prior to euthanasia. This has happened on one previous occasion during the time I have been volunteering at ABC. Personally I feel extremely uncomfortable that rescued bats are supplied to universities for research.

#### Behind House aviary 2:

This aviary currently holds around 60 Alectos and GHFFs. It has wide gauge wiring suspended about 1.5m from the top of the aviary. This wiring is collapsing in places and hangs down; again, it would take a couple of volunteers and hour or two to fix, but there just isn't the manpower available. I believe it is a danger to the f-fs within; they could injure themselves on protruding bits of wire.

There are two or three females in this aviary with babies, but they miss out on the smoothies because enough would have to be given to feed all of the animals in the aviary and again, lack of finances and manpower mean they miss out. *(April 2018: apparently these animals also received smoothies during March, when Trish was in hospital)*

#### House aviary:

This is an enclosed extension which would have been a garage space originally. It has an indoor/outdoor aspect so animals can choose to go into the small wired in area outside. From November it housed the spectacled f-fs. I have had nothing to do with these. Initially, volunteers would arrive to feed them, but once the “Speccies” were self-feeding thus needing less attention, were no longer required. Hopefully Speccies will soon be returning to Cairns. I understand that around 30 of them developed pneumonia. When I mentioned this to an experienced NSW carer, she said they must be using bottles instead of syringes. If the bottles deliver the milk too quickly, inhalation of the milk results and static pneumonia develops. Certainly bottles and not syringes were used, but whether this was the cause of the pneumonia or something else, I can't say. *(10 April 2018: 65 Speccies returned to N Qld. Trish out of hospital so drove them to meet up with Jon Hanger and then on to Cairns. What happened to the other 35?)*

Before the arrival of the Speccies, this area housed flying-foxes in cages made from two metal baskets approx. 60x30x30 wired together and fixed into what looks like washing basket trolleys, with one end able to be opened for access.

Some of the f-fs are too long for these cages and when they hang, their heads not only touch but press into the paper-covered cage bottom. I noted more than once that a particularly large animal would be unable to hang without its head touching the floor of the cage or the head being forced forward with the animal resting on the back of its neck. To relieve this position they had to bend their legs and draw up their bodies. It is impossible for the f-fs to stretch their wings or flap.

When possible, taller cages are sought, but not always found. The cages are supposedly to facilitate medication and treatment but some animals remain in them for weeks. I am never there in the early morning or during the evenings, so cannot say which bats or how many receive treatment. The “invalid” cage/baskets were approx. 18 in number when I first started volunteering, although this varied. They housed one, two or three animals. Newspaper lining was changed daily. Fresh water and juice was given daily and food delivered in plastic kidney dishes.

There is also a cage approx. 120cm x 100cm x 70cm housing 6 or 7 LRFFs. Some of these are mothers with young. Most have been in that cage since I have been coming there. This cage also offers no opportunity to flap wings.

More than once I have seen a f-f get part or most of a wing through the squares of the cage then panic because they couldn't pull their wing back in. It took time and skill to help them retrieve the wing.

These f-fs were wheeled out in the mornings to get some sun and received 50/50 diluted apple/mango juice, or in the case of LRFFs, diluted mango nectar. In the past few weeks, I haven't seen any mango nectar, so assume all get apple/ mango now. Since the arrival of the Speccies, they live on the deck of the main house in their cages and I doubt they see the sun. Since Trish has been in hospital since 6 or 7 Feb, I wonder what if any treatment they have received. I have seen one f-f demonstrate repetitive behaviour, as though trying to fly; the frustration is so apparent when its efforts prove fruitless.

*(April 2018: during Trish's hospitalisation several of these f-fs were removed from the cages and put into the various other aviaries, leaving perhaps a half dozen cages on the deck.)*

There are two metal cages, one sits on the other, horrible dark things with bars in the doors and a few metal bars in the roof where the bats have to hang. They make up one unit on wheels.

This area also houses a linen room, which often has been found to have large amounts of mouse droppings; clearly they nest there. Therefore carpet pythons would be interested in gaining access, which one volunteer told me has happened, as the area is not sufficiently predator-proof. During March something must have died in there

because the stench was awful. Mouse droppings were often found in the treatment areas also. This may have improved when the Speccies arrived, but I don't think so.

### Treatment rooms

There are 2 treatment areas, one with a sink and hot water, unavailable to those of us working the outside aviaries since the arrival of the Speccies, which needed to be isolated. Also a cleaning area adjacent with hot water. No light working in the room where the dishes were previously washed; the hose from the tap leaks badly and eventually made use of that sink impossible. All aviary feed trays and water buckets are cleaned outside where there is no hot water and only two hoses, one in the release aviary, one from near the back of house aviary. There are no stands and only a small sink. The hoses utilise bore water, so tank water from a sink outside the house and in the food prep area are used to replenish water buckets.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> treatment area is cluttered with trolleys and an assortment of medical equipment; we don't disturb this. There is a fridge in the first treatment area, which can have fruit juice and plastic-wrapped corpses of dead animals alongside medications etc.

### Food

Food for the animals consists of whatever Trish has been able to obtain; apparently suppliers offer no freebies(?). Some volunteers bring food for the bats and the ducks, chooks and goose and volunteers supply much of the fruit juice. Only two other volunteers and I ensure that all of the f-fs get juice. I know that the bats on the deck aviary and those in the back aviaries receive none when we aren't there.

Because the cool room is not working, vast amounts of fruit simply rot in the heat. The amount of wastage is appalling.

The prepared fruit goes into large plastic buckets which are eventually lugged around by volunteers to the various aviaries. Fruit is chopped in the mornings and left to stand in the heat in an area adjacent to the cool room, until feed-out time, which can vary from around 2.30 pm to 3.30pm. Plastic freezer bottles are sat amongst the fruit, which is left uncovered. During the many days of 30+ temperatures it is not hard to imagine what state the fruit, with its massive load of fruit flies, is in by the time it is delivered to the f-fs. I have arrived to clean out in the morning and have seen whole untouched trays of fermenting fruit. Considering how hungry these animals always seem to be, this is saying something.



I asked two volunteers on separate occasions about adding HPS to the fruit and got blank looks. You know, High Protein Supplement, from Wombaroo. Apparently what passes for HPS is Divetelact, which I consider an inappropriate supplement.

For me the method of food delivery is problematic; in winter when apples were plentiful, they were threaded onto wires measuring anything from 0.5 – 1m or so in length. These were hooked on the wire sides of the aviaries. Some of these wires would be immediately commandeered by the dominant animals, who denied access to the more timid. Also given the hardness of some of the apples and their size, I believe that it was difficult for some animals actually to get a good bite of fruit hung this way.

Similarly whole fruit is hung in wire baskets around the sides of the aviaries and the same problems of bullying occur. Unless the fruit is soft e.g. mango, pear and easily accessible, the same difficulty getting a decent bite applies.

The bulk of the fruit is delivered in feeding trays, which are hung from the aviary “ceiling wire” or as in the LR aviary, from hooks on the sides or suspended from what looks like an elongated fridge shelf (about 2m).

Always at feed time there is a mad scramble for the food and again, dominant animals force their less aggressive/assertive companions to wait or go to the ground for spats or fallen pieces of fruit.

There are no salt licks for bats in hot weather. When I mentioned that I was having my face and neck licked madly by f-fs and suggested salt licks and offered to buy some, I was told there were some and that they would be put out, but I haven’t seen them yet.

Apart from the bats, the roosters and hens on the property do it pretty tough; at least they would without volunteers bringing them food. There are more roosters than hens, which means hens with no feathers on their backs or the backs of their heads. The rooster which sired the chicks in the LRFF aviary was constantly attacked by the others, he eventually disappeared; I suspect killed or taken by a predator.

#### April 2018

During Trish’s hospitalisation there were desultory attempts to clean out the bat aviaries. The 2 at the back of the house have been emptied as has the one on the patio. These bats are now either in the release aviary or the LR aviary.

NB it is mating season and in the release aviary are all the females with young, some still lactating, as well as the males who are now full of testosterone and attempting to mate with the females. During food preparation and cleaning by volunteers the air is rent by screams of frustrated males, of unwilling females forced into mating, of

juveniles screeching in distress. Females are unable to escape the attentions of the males. **(April 24: the release aviary window has been opened today. This means f-fs with the afore-mentioned injuries are in the same precarious predicament as before when it comes to predation by carpet pythons, lace monitors and birds of prey.)**

In NSW it is prohibited to allow such mating to occur. Males at this time of year should be separated from females and housed separately.

Comment on the OH and S aspect of this place;

- The path to the LR aviary is quite steep and at times slippery, especially after rain.
- The areas where cleaning takes place put one in mind of a third world country, with no hot water, no adequate cleaning materials or utensils, apart from those brought by the volunteers themselves. Even when I have spent time cleaning, by the time I arrive the following week everything is filthy again, because of the dearth of volunteers. It remains to one or two dedicated volunteers to carry out most of the work of food prep, feeding out and cleaning of food and water containers. Not much time or energy after that to start scrubbing sinks etc.
- Much of the wire making up the aviaries is disintegrating. In many places there are bits of metal sticking out; dangerous for both humans and bats. I would like to see these aviaries not only decommissioned, but dismantled permanently.
- Although volunteers are required to be vaccinated before handling f-fs or entering aviaries, at no time was I required to show proof of my immune status (titre level) In NSW the f-f coordinator demands that annual titre levels be taken and recorded. Until that is done, volunteers are not permitted to handle bats.
- Toilet and washbasin dirty; am I the only one ever to clean the toilet?
- There are always mounds of dirty linen on the verandah and lying around outside aviaries, an ideal situation for bacterial and other kinds of contamination.

I transcribed some diary entries:

Fri 11 August 2017

LR babies all dead?

Trish saying 4 but I know what I counted.

(This entry refers to 5 LRFF babies which were found on the floor of the LR aviary.) All were on i/v antibiotics and with i/v catheters in their tiny legs because they had pneumonia. I think they died one by one, despite Trish claiming to have returned one to its mother (in the aviary? not possible). Note that they were all fed from bottles

too, not syringes. Their care was massively time consuming; my concern is for the many other f-fs requiring treatment during this time – how were they cared for?

Fri 18 August 2017

One bat in house aviary hanging – B thought he was dead – looked v. ill – we put him in a basket with juice. He drank 2 full bottles – must have been terribly dehydrated & unable to get @ food & juice because there's a lot of bullying and squabbling so timid ones get a hard time. So much is terrible there

Anyway, this guy looked much better by the time I left.

(found out later he died)

Fri 25 August 2017

F-f found dead in one of those double basket cages.

Fri 1 Sept 2017

F-f dead in cage. The one we found dehydrated in large enclosure attached to house? B and I rehydrated him – took +/- 100ml straight off. Looked better by the time we left. So don't know if it was this one or another who died.

Fri 8 Sept 2017

Another f-f dead. 4 now – 1 p.w. last 4 weeks. This one from the horrible dark metal cage. There were 3 – noted one really timid – possibly not eating? B moved the other 2 to the upper cage – more light – bit less depressing. Neither (cage) has appropriate footholds – just metal bars over the top.

Fri 15 Sept 2017

Only B, me and Trish to do all that work.

Fri 22 Sept 2017

One male GHFF looking ill. Took him and put him in basket. Trish said he was probably just sunning himself. Like I don't know a sick animal when I see one. We gave him juice and let him rest, returned him. When I checked on him before I left he was again just hanging – not eating. Feeds had been put out by then - 2.30pm!

So I reported what I had seen and Trish said she'd check.

Fri 29 Sept 2017

I believe all 5 LR babies have died. (Originally) found on ground in aviary. Were there others already dead? Why did the mothers abandon them like that?  
No shade in LR aviary they never get juice.

#### Fri 6 October 2017

Only me and Trish to do everything today. I arrived late . I did all the aviaries by myself – all cages as well. 2 cages I hadn't even realised were occupied until I thought I'd finished. Trish did floors/walls in cage room and front aviary.

Was leaving then saw Little Reds frantic in aviary so fed out there – note GHFF and Alectos there too. > 100 animals I'd say 2x more than should be.  
*(Anecdotal but I believe many of LRFFs have been in aviary > 2 yrs. Given many fly well, what are they doing there?)*

18 cages containing 1-3 individuals. Some serious fighting going on in LR cage at house. 7-8 bats confined to that cage. Some released – from NSW? So where the hell, are *they* supposed to go? They don't know where they are – transported here by car.

#### Fri 10 Nov 2017

Duck in aviary; beaten up by others when its partner died from tick bite. Depressed and lonely. Will ask Trish if I can have it. It was inadvertently let out and was attacked by the goose.

#### Fri 17 Nov 2017

Little Red aviary still a cess pit. 1 chook and 1 duck being repeatedly raped. Trish seems oblivious of this. One rooster being picked on – this ignored too.  
On Monday 100 spectacled f-fs are coming. She can't look after the ones she already has adequately.

#### Mon 20 Nov 2017

Big movements – all front room bats going onto the patio aviary. Those from patio going into release aviary which is now closed off for ?? days. Serious overcrowding in this area. Blacks and GHFFs from LR cage to be added to this. All so 100 Speccies can be added to Trish's collection?

8 Dec 2017

Tiffany and Rachel leaving (> a week early) – didn't get a chance to speak to them – well I did but was flat out. Went up to the cabins later to say goodbye OMG all overgrown and dilapidated. Disintegrating. Weeds taller than I am.

Wed 20 Dec 2017

Little Red male dead @ base of gate to aviary – hanging off the wire.  
Haven't seen the black rooster that sired the 6 surviving chickens for a while – missing presumed dead – he got beaten up by other roosters more dominant.

Sun 24 Dec 2017

Found another dead LRff female hanging on the wire of the aviary. Probably died last night. In the heat this aviary has no proper shelter. Br. was there, she did the verandah bats and helped a bit but mainly I cleaned everything. No clean water out for chooks or ducks. The isolated duck probably hadn't seen clean water for 2 days. Lori had no food. Left him with lori mix, corn, apple. Gave aviary chooks extra – left food in a marked container for duck outside the aviary. Enough for 2-3 days.

Fri 29 Dec 2017

Anecdotal from B and J: they rescued a lactating GHFF from fruit netting. Callers had heard noise around 3am so she'd been caught +/- 6 hours prior to rescue. Examination by Trish revealed no visible injuries so she told them to release her later. I told them they mustn't because of the danger of wing disintegration after so many hours caught but because she was lactating, i.e. a baby in camp somewhere, she was released.

Tues Jan 2 2018

To bat clinic took ages getting there went via Aldi to get juice. Got there around 10 Qld time. Was collecting the empty feeding trays from the LR aviary; saw one hanging – thumb caught b/w panels. Got Robyn to help. We tried standing on milk crate and pushing thumbnail up to free it– too low. Got ladder I went up but he'd bitten through his thumb - # bone protruding and only a dried thread of skin keeping him there. Asked Michelle to get scissors so I could cut it. Trish demanded access "so that it could be done properly" as though we were all beginners and she the only one who knows what they're doing.

Fri 12 Jan 2018

B was there so all the bats got juice.



There was actually no fruit but the rotting stuff in boxes and what B, J and I brought. Had to pick out the least rotten stuff to feed them.

Entry hole for rats in LR cage. Found 2 in a feed bag for the chooks that I'd left in the alcove thing that sticks out from the wall of the aviary. Will keep chook food in glass jar from now on.

Still no water available to service LR aviary. Cool room still not working.

Basket of rotting dried out mangoes in LR aviary – the one I put in 2 weeks ago I think, when I was here last

#### Thurs 1 Feb 2018

Total mess – R sick – filth and chaos everywhere

#### Wed 7 Feb 2018

Trish in hospital – only me cleaning. Didn't look like any cleaning has been done for days. Jai "stepping up". Using vollies to help clear out house, not to help with animals. J and B arrived and did feeds in LR aviary. No watermelon for Speccies – inadequate food. I made sure all in my area had extra juice – used 10L. If B and I didn't supply juice no one would get it.

Lorikeet aviary door wide open no bird could hear but not see him. Can't fly so probably doomed. (Happy ending here – he came in for a feed and was caught and put back in aviary.)

*April 2018: Unfortunately every time I go into his aviary, he has no food in his dish and I don't know how long he has been without it. There are now several chickens and a hen sharing his space, so there is the added problem of keeping the little beggars from flying up and pinching the lori's food as well as trying to ensure their water supply. Always dirty when I get there, but being chooks they can do that in minutes.*

*(April 24: chooks have been moved to back aviary so plenty of room, if no proper roost.)*

## **Conclusion**

During the past 10 months I have become more and more disheartened by the conditions at the ABC. Because of chronic overcrowding and I hate to say, neglect; bats suffer injuries, they die, they always seem to be hungry. I have witnessed bullying, intimidation and sexual assault. I do not believe that these behaviours are normal – in the wild, animals have a chance to move away from each other, females have an opportunity to reject unwanted advances.

I do not believe it possible for one person, no matter how experienced or talented they perceive themselves to be, to care adequately for even 100 flying-foxes, let alone 300+. The condition of the aviaries is deplorable. The lack of hygiene in food preparation, delivery and storage is appalling. The number of what I believe to be untreated injuries and ailments equally so.

The level of denial is shocking. I cannot understand why this situation has been allowed to continue for so long – I truly believe these aviaries must be decommissioned and never recommissioned. The flying-foxes need to be transferred to other groups and the ABC closed permanently.

A source told me the ABC has previously been reported to the RSPCA and another informed me that monthly inspections were supposed to take place. Similarly, I was told that the EPA does inspections. If this is so, who is doing the inspections? Are they completely incapable of seeing how bad conditions are and how much the animals are suffering? Do the inspectors have any experience at all with flying-foxes or knowledge of their requirements in care?

I believe that inspections must be done without prior notice and that inspectors must have no connection with ABC.

Ilona Roberts  
Tumbulgum 2490

## APPENDIX 4

### Flying-fox Concerns

Rhonda Miller, Flying-fox Carer and Coordinator, NSW.

*Report submitted to DES, RSPCA and Biosecurity, April 2018.*

**From:** Rhonda Miller

**Date:** 25 April 2018 at 12:12:09 pm AEST

**To:** [palm@ehp.qld.gov.au](mailto:palm@ehp.qld.gov.au)

**Cc:** [cruelty\\_complaints@rspcaqld.org.au](mailto:cruelty_complaints@rspcaqld.org.au), [president@ausbats.org.au](mailto:president@ausbats.org.au), [secretary@ausbats.org.au](mailto:secretary@ausbats.org.au), [janine.barrett@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:janine.barrett@daf.qld.gov.au)

**Subject:** Flying Fox Concerns

To whom it may concern

My name is Rhonda Miller. In 2010 I joined a local wildlife group in New South Wales. At the orientation I saw a baby flying fox being fed with a little bottle and instantly fell in love. I immediately went and got myself vaccinated and from then on I have worked continuously with flying foxes in the capacity of rescuing, rehabilitating and raising orphaned babies. I was the groups bat coordinator for a number of years.

I had heard a great deal about the ABC bat clinic near Advancetown, Queensland; almost all of it negative. Last year I decided to go and have a look at this property for myself. I was distressed and disgusted at the state of the entire centre. My concern was mainly for the flying foxes and their state of health which was appalling. I could see many with untreated injuries and old wounds, apparently also untreated. Many of these bats were unable to fly because of severe old injuries.

I left there feeling completely dejected and heartbroken for these beautiful creatures who are suffering from lack of proper care.

About a month ago I decided to go up with another carer who volunteers there on a weekly basis to assist her in any way, as I have seen how upset and distressed she is after her day there. If I was horrified after my first visit words cannot describe what I now see. This place is much worse. Something needs to be done to relieve these poor flying foxes of the hell in which they are forced to live. I could go on and fill pages and pages of the things that are wrong there and the suffering these animals endure through lack of proper care.

This place needs to be inspected by people who know about flying foxes, their dietary requirements, (I don't believe they are getting the required 350 g of fruit per bat with no HPS), their medical requirements, their housing requirements and their general requirements.

This situation would never be accepted in New South Wales and I'm sure it would be the same in Queensland so how can someone get away with this sort of appalling treatment.

Rhonda Miller  
Tweed Heads

PS

On my recent visit, just days ago, they were opening the enclosures for the bats to

be self release, but to where?? as there is no colony anywhere near this centre and such a large number of the bats are unable to fly because of injuries. This has become an urgent situation and needs to be dealt with immediately.

Rhonda





## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Report from 2008 Regarding Bat Care Issues by Trish Wimberley**

Dave Pinson, Flying-fox Carer, Trainer and Author of *The Flying-fox Manual*.

Tuesday 20 August 2019

Dave Pinson, 73 Cedar Road, Cow Bay, QLD 4873

**Report from 2008 regarding bat care issues by Trish Wimberley, when owner of Narrowleaf - which became Australian Bat Clinic (ABC).**

Dear Sir/Madam

This report went to the management committee of Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers (TVWC) in 2008 when I was bat coordinator with the group. After group discussion, all bats going to ABC were given a group-wide ban, which was never reinstated due to horrendous practices continuing long after 2008 to recently when ABC folded.

-----Original Message-----

**Subject: RE: Update on bat crisis**

A totally different story from Karen Scott (President of Wildcare at the time) to those of us who have gone in (and been ridiculed and rejected for their effort). You don't ask for help (not that any of us have been - still) and then continually shun that help.

The terrible photos I have been sent which disregard every basic tenet of baby flying-fox care - crammed into humidicribs under enormous stress. The rest of Australia knows that you do not put flying-fox babies into humidicribs en masse, and what happens if you do (topical and systemic infection - bearing in mind all 14 Spectacled Flying-fox babies in 2004 came down with wing infection under Trish' expert care). The baby crying open mouthed in pain with broken swollen fingers who Trish would not let vet, Mike Pyne euthanase (she wanted to wait a little longer). The Black Flying-fox babies being laid flat on change tables with no heat support and no milk for hours. When finally fed, milk was cold, off and nowhere near correct volume. A baby with two broken legs just being left to its own devices. Have just talked to a 20-year veteran who went in (and was laughed at and insulted behind her back). After what she really witnessed (not what Wildcare want people to believe), is disgusted. She questioned Sergio from QPWS, and as usual, they just seemed to look the other way. Same carer offered to take 50 pups and was rejected.

Shocking bat care is nothing new at Narrowleaf/ABC, but most worrying of all that Bat Rescue Gold Coast reported these Wildcare 'hoons' crashing around in the colony, scaring away mothers. And a hugely experienced coordinator reporting that many of these babies were superbly hydrated on intake (impossible after supposedly being orphaned many days before). You can easily create waves of your own "orphans" with such irresponsible behaviour. We fear that with many of this amazingly large number - they may not actually have been orphaned in the first place. You have to be extremely careful in colonies, with people quietly walking and stopping in pairs - not a whole heap of people laughing, yelling, and crashing around. To the inexperienced, any pup by itself looks like an orphan, but often are not. Experienced carers watch, observe and only act if necessary. Also, to only lose five or so pups from 300+ supposedly compromised pups is just impossible. We know from events at Dallis Park, Singleton, Bellingen, and Blackbutt what happens to orphaned pups in end stage organ failure from no hydration and nutrition for seven days, and we won't even mention pneumonia. A loss number like that suggests most were not orphans, they were made orphans from irresponsible behaviour.

Just as Trish completely stuffed up the Spectacled Flying-fox airlift to SEQ in 2004 and refused to sign QPWS MOA (thereby shutting the door for all NSW bat carers, and bringing so many Qld bat carers into disrepute with QPWS). Trish is shunned by almost all responsible bat carers on the east coast, and I have personally witnessed her unbelievable lies and cruelty. Cheryl Cochran has tales of horror from her last visit: baby flying-foxes in blazing sun (wrong cage placement) with no water; Flying-foxes in the cage with slimy wing - unrecognised and untreated; adults in the 'back dungeon' - filthy and no water; possums in blazing sun - no water; baby marsupials not fed for hours (but would not let

Cheryl feed); adult flying-foxes looking up in wide-eyed terror from the floor in cages. Sue, the ex-wildcare vet nurse at King Street Vet has witnessed terrible things (whole wings chopped off, FFs on the floor, FFs fitting and drugged down - not euthanased; the list goes on and on).

My last visit to Narrowleaf shocked me. An adult flying-fox with a ripped open back in a cocky cage - awash with urine, in the sun, in pain, and flies everywhere - not even assessed or begun treatment hours later. I asked Trish could I please move the animal and treat it for pain and infection control - I was refused. When I left it was still there untreated. Adults in cages on the floor - the single best way to terrify an adult flying-fox. Totally inadequate or non-existent care, and all this from someone who promotes herself as an expert, and does not understand babies need to hang, be warmed, and have their milk warmed. Adults flying around the house in contact with un-vaccinated carers.

The real truth stares every knowledgeable visitor in the face. But how do you begin to prove any of this, and then people risk the legal wrath of husband, Terry Wimberley if taking it further - not the first time he would have threatened. QPWS and RSPCA appear to have done nothing over the years, so everyone has given up reporting.

I have talked to both groups who went in (uninvited) and they are professionally disgusted by what they witnessed. My hat off to the army of people who have helped, but how many were really orphans? How many had mothers? We will never know. Our three groups have still not been asked for help, and Ozark is the only place she has posted - not the 200 member strong FFICN group who can mobilise in minutes. These animals were given blanket approval to cross border and go as far as Sydney by QPWS, and despite all the offers - nothing! They all stayed in appalling conditions.

This is not the first time at Canungra. Last season the colony went down with cold stress. Trish did not alert us, and as usual did not post on FFICN (where the real help is). We knew nothing for 48 hours - nothing - and then when the death rate climbed (as she could not figure out how to warm hypothermic pups) she had the gall to blame all other care groups for not helping. We DID NOT know. It was disgusting, and only quick intervention by BRGC saved some.

I could go on and on and on. I am disgusted by the difference in what the public sees (the image that glory-seeking Trish portrays), and the sad reality of what those of us in 5 separate groups including her own witness. Wildcare bat carers continually leave and join the other 2 SEQ groups as she will not allow them to look after baby bats, and they all bring tales of woe.

#### **Further observations since original 2008 report**

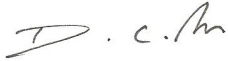
Before the TVWC ban on bats going to her 'torture hospital', a couple more cases I was involved in. A black paralysed male was sent for expert care with Trish who completely failed to diagnose via veterinary x-ray that it had spinal fracture. That animal suffered for so long. It was demanded back and euthanased. In another case, Trish claimed to have done ground-breaking work with ruptured palates (a common injury from barbed wire entanglement). There is no procedure or treatment for such cases, and all such animals are euthanased. An animal with such an injury was sent to Trish for care. Six weeks later said animal returned to TVWC with exactly the same unresolved injury. The suffering that animal went through does not bear thinking about. It was immediately euthanased.

What else have I personally seen? Little red flying-foxes not released and still in care 3 years later. Overcrowded stressed Little reds losing all their fur. A mystery non-existent condition was blamed for that instead of the real reasons - overcrowding, stress and mite infestation. When questioned about treatment, she claimed a new species of mite which did not exist and thus would not respond to an over-the-counter treatment. There are no new species of mite - it was simply poor animal management, failure to recognise, and failure to treat. Instead she had volunteers making them all jackets to 'keep them warm'.

I have witnessed awful flight cages whereby wing-trapping netting was coming loose from the ceiling creating hazards, awful hygiene, continual lack of water in cages - but when questioned the standard response was always, "I was just going to do that." And the list of horrors goes on.

Perhaps the single worst thing she has continually done is to tell her bunch of loyal followers that various tried and true treatments do not work and undermines the rest of us experienced and ethical carers. That sadly only leads to one unfortunate result. More carers 'trained' by her inflicting incorrect or dangerous treatment regimes to unknown numbers of flying-foxes. Just awful.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. C. Pinson'.

Dave Pinson - bat carer for over 20 years, trainer and author of The Flying-fox manual ISBN 978-0-9805340-0-9



## **APPENDIX 6**

### **August 2019 Report from BCRQ Executive Committee Regarding Orphans Sent to the Australian Bat Clinic for Release**

Jennifer Sullivan, BWildlifeSc, BMus, DipEd.,  
President, Bat Conservation & Rescue, Queensland





**Bat Conservation  
& Rescue QLD. INC.**  
RESCUE . EDUCATION . CONSERVATION . HABITAT



**August 2019 Report from BCRQ Executive Committee regarding orphans sent to the Australian Bat Clinic for release**

In 2015 and 2016, the then Executive Committee of Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld Inc (BCRQ) decided to send their hand-raised flying-fox orphans to the Australian Bat Clinic (ABC) for release under the direct supervision of the proprietor Trish Wimberley, as BCRQ did not have a release cage of our own.

The membership was assured that standards at the ABC were high and that the proprietor's activities would be closely monitored by the Executive Committee.

BCRQ data confirms that 142 healthy flying-foxes (mostly hand-raised orphans plus a number of rehabilitated adults), all flight-tested and confirmed to be flying, were sent to the ABC during 2015-2016 with the understanding that they would be released back to the wild as per standard release practices following a short time in the release cage.

Payments totalling \$3127.27 in 2015 and \$1460 in 2016 were made by BCRQ to the ABC for this service which is customary at most release sites and typically covers the cost of feeding for the 4 to 6 weeks orphans are expected to be in care before release, as well as the costs incurred with support feeding during the soft release process which may take up to a further 8 weeks.

It has come as a shock to discover that the majority of our identified orphans were still held in captivity at the ABC some six months later and that over one-third of them were documented as being still there after a year. Three of these bats were removed from the ABC in 2018; two were euthanased and one remains in care.

The task now falls upon the current Executive Committee to communicate this information to BCRQ orphan carers and to assist our members in dealing with this news.

BCRQ Executive Committee overwhelmingly supports any initiative that ensures that permitted people fully comply with the conditions of rehabilitation permits.

Jennifer Sullivan BWildlifeSc, BMus, DipEd  
BCRQ President on behalf of the Executive Committee & BCRQ Membership

**Web site:** [www.bats.org.au](http://www.bats.org.au)

**Face book:** <https://www.facebook.com/batconQLD/>

**Give Now Donation page:** <https://www.givenow.com.au/bats>

Charity Registration Number: CH2090



## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Australian Bat Clinic Report 2019**

Denise Wade, Flying-fox Carer, Flying-fox Rehabilitation Coordinator 2008-2018,  
Bat Conservation & Rescue, Queensland

## Denise Wade - Australian Bat Clinic Report 2019

In 2015 and 2016 the decision was made by the then BCRQ Executive Committee to send our orphans to the Australian Bat Clinic for release, despite vehement opposition from BCRQ orphan carers, including multiple emails that I sent to Committee as the Flying-fox Rehabilitation Coordinator.

I informed the President that in no way, shape or form did I support the move, as for many years I had heard first-hand accounts of neglect and overcrowding at the ABC as well as persistent reports of flying-foxes with 'slimy wing'.

After relaying these concerns to the committee, I was assured that conditions at the ABC had improved, that my concerns were unwarranted and that Executive Committee members would closely monitor the welfare of BCRQ's orphans whilst at the ABC.

Three batches of orphans were sent to the ABC before I received a phone call from Dr Kerryn Parry-Jones in early 2016, confirming my worst fears and informing me that slimy wing was rampant in the bat cages, that there was severe overcrowding with approximately 600 flying-foxes in captivity and that there was "no flow-through", meaning that bats were not being released.

I took this information to the Executive Committee and the Committee finally agreed on welfare grounds, to halt the transport of orphans destined for the ABC.

It was therefore with great relief that I heard the ABC was closing down in 2018 and that the hundreds of incarcerated bats were finally being liberated.

As a recipient of a small number of these flying-foxes (13 Blacks and 4 Little Reds) I wasn't expecting these bats to be in peak condition but I was truly shocked to the core when I saw the state of these animals.

All the Blacks that I received were suffering from advanced slimy wing, with over half so severely crippled that they were euthanased at the RSPCA. Following months in care, five Blacks were eventually sent for release.

All of the Black Flying-foxes I received were very thin; all ate constantly for the first three days and nights, such was the depth of their hunger. All had advanced slimy wing, with some having painful ruptured joints caused by membrane contraction as a direct result of untreated slimy wing. These bats showed significant signs of pain and in my opinion, were suffering immensely despite regular doses of pain relief. They were shivering, they rarely moved for the first week or so indicating generalised pain, they attempted to guard painful areas during necessary Malaseb washes and they reacted violently when their wings were extended for treatment. Their coats and eyes were dull and they all had infected necrotic ears. As nobody I consulted had ever seen slimy wing progress to this level, I felt we were in uncharted waters and nobody knew whether plasticised membrane could ever recover.

We rarely encounter 'slimy wing' in either rescued bats or in those in care and to see advanced slimy wing to the point where entire wing surfaces were 'plasticised', with no elasticity and with open, weeping lesions and massive wing contractures, was indicative of the length of time these animals had suffered. Treatment for slimy wing is not difficult, expensive nor time consuming. A thorough soaking of the area in diluted Malaseb wash every three days will generally see the condition clear up with two to three applications.

Of the four Little Reds that I received from another carer, after they had been assessed and treated by RSPCA staff, three were eventually euthanased at the RSPCA with unviable finger bone loss and wing contraction and only one made it back to the wild.

As a flying-fox carer I am devastated that so many lives were so pointlessly lost and that so many trusting orphan carers have been betrayed.

As a human being I am appalled and angry at the degree of suffering our lovingly hand-raised orphans endured.

In summary, I would like to highlight RSPCA Australia's definition of 'Duty of care' as I believe the basic 'Five Freedoms' were not provided to the bats which were, for so many years, Trish Wimberley's responsibility.

*If you are in charge of an animal, you have a duty of care to that animal - no matter why you are in charge of it, what you are using it for or how long it will be in your care. Duty of care is based on the internationally recognised 'Five Freedoms' of animal welfare:*

- *Freedom from hunger and thirst: by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.*
- *Freedom from discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.*
- *Freedom from pain, injury or disease: by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.*
- *Freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.*
- *Freedom from fear and distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.*

Denise Wade  
Former BCRQ Flying-fox Rehabilitation Coordinator, 2008 - 2018



## **APPENDIX 8**

### **Spectacled Flying-fox Rescue 2004-05**

Sylvia Hood, BAppSc, MSc. President, Bat Rescue Inc.  
Vicki Bressan, former Coordinator Bat Rescue Inc. Gold Coast Branch



## SPECTACLED FLYING-FOX RESCUE 2004-2005

### Background

This is a summarised account of the first successful transportation of Spectacled Flying-fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*) orphans from the Atherton Tablelands to Brisbane in November 2004, and details the specific issues we encountered with caring standards. Orphans placed into care with Wildcare Australia and their bat coordinator at the time, Trish Wimberley, required the most intervention and continuous monitoring.

It was the first time an operation of this scale involved carers in South East Queensland (SE Qld). The orphans were subsequently returned for creche and release successfully in December 2004 and January 2005. Bat Rescue Inc co-ordinated the SE Qld operation, and 87 out of 90 orphans were returned to Far North Queensland (FN Qld) for release.

Protocols were discussed and developed in Brisbane with Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) and included:

- Quarantine procedures
- Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by carers, Jenny Maclean (Tolga Bat Hospital), Leslie Shirreffs (QPWS) and Annie Saunders (QWRC)
- Weekly report to Scott Sullivan, QPWS in Townsville.

Jenny Maclean from the Tolga Bat Hospital was the coordinator in FN Qld. The co-ordinator for SE Qld was Chairperson of Bat Rescue Inc. at the time. Members of Bat Rescue Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast played a major role in supporting the co-ordination effort in SE Qld.

### Co-ordinating Carers & Organisations

The most difficult task was sourcing the carers as it required many telephone enquiries and because many of the bat carers in SE Qld were not part of any network such as FFICN, an extensive network of flying-fox carers across Qld and NSW. Various organisations known to work with flying-foxes were approached. The first contact made was through the Moggill Koala Hospital Rangers and their network of carers.





The breakdown of organisations that participated included:

CARERS	ORGANISATION
4	Bat Rescue Inc. Gold Coast
9	Bat Rescue Inc. Sunshine Coast
4	F.A.U.N.A.
5	Wildcare Australia
3	Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital
14	Moggill Carers Network
1	Private Permit Holder
<b>40</b>	<b>TOTAL (from 6 organisations)</b>



## Receipt of Spectacled Flying-foxes into SE Qld

There was very short notice for arrivals as Spectacled Flying-fox (SFF) orphans were being rescued on a daily basis in FN Qld and the co-ordinator had two days' notice of the first arrival. As contacts with carers had already been made, it was a matter of mobilising the carers to collect their orphans at the airport terminal.

The schedule of arrivals was as follows:

ARRIVAL DATE	NO.
6 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	25
8 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	28
13 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	23
18 <sup>th</sup> November 2004	14
<b>TOTAL SFF ORPHANS RECEIVED</b>	<b>90</b>



On arrival, the following process was adopted

- Arrange for the use of a secure demountable at the airport terminal to process the SFF (This was available for the first two arrivals then the carpark was used)
- Receive box of live bats and open
- Weight and forearm measurements, gender and identification (coloured wrap or painted nails) recorded
- A code number was assigned to each orphan
- Babies passed to a carer for assessment, then feeding or rehydrating
- Bats placed into cages for separate carers/carers groups
- Paperwork written up and Orphan History Sheets accompanied the bats to be distributed to carers.

## Record Keeping

An Orphan History Sheet for SFF was developed based on the regular reporting tools utilised by Bat Rescue Inc. This allowed each bat to be identified and measured and was to accompany each bat to their designated carer. If orphans were transferred to another carer, then generally the form followed the bat with only a few exceptions. Feeding charts were also attached as a guide for the carers, as it was apparent that there could be different orphan-raising techniques employed. The MOU was finalised after the second delivery of babies. Bat Rescue Inc. liaised with their local rangers throughout the whole process.

The co-ordinator sent the MOU out to each carer along with the signatories of Jenny Maclean, Leslie Shirreffs and Debra Hotchkis. A form was included for carers to also sign stating that they understood the guidelines and agreed to abide by them. These were sent back and forwarded to Jenny Maclean. There were only 3 non-respondents including Trish Wimberley, member of Wildcare Australia. Each week, the carers were required to take measurements (weight and forearm) of their orphans and report it in to the co-ordinator.

There were some carers who were unfamiliar with the measuring techniques, including Trish Wimberley, whose reporting on the orphans in her own care was inconsistent from week to week. The records regularly required adjustment for accuracy by Vicki Bressan. This was important as the orphans were of varying ages, even within the same delivery, and it was the only way of determining when they would be ready for return to FN Qld. The weekly statistics were also important for analysis on the progress of these animals. A standard measure used is Grams Per Day (GPD), which is simply an average daily weight gain over a week. This tells us how the animal is going in care. For example, at least 2 GPD is expected for an orphan in care, when raising a Black or Grey-headed Flying-fox, and could be higher for a Spectacled Flying-fox .

## Issues with Standards of Care



The range in care standards across SE Qld emerged to us as a risk early in the project, and was managed with continuous monitoring and reporting to the QPWS, and treatment under vet supervision for any issues which arose.

Problems as a result of sub-standard caring practices were most apparent at Trish Wimberley's property, where all 13 orphans were managed until Bat Rescue Gold Coast's Coordinator

at the time, Vicki Bressan, convinced Trish to distribute them out to carers for one-on-one care. The animals in her care required the most intervention, with more than half of them requiring treatment for fungal infections ("slimy wing") and/or mite infestations.



These issues occur rarely whilst hand-raising orphans in our experience of over twenty years. Regular cleaning, sunlight, and close observation are basic caring standards that would normally prevent these types of problems, however standards may drop when one carer has too many animals. Delaying the distribution of orphans to individual carers may have exacerbated these health issues and yet Trish Wimberley assured us the orphans would be distributed to carers when she received the orphans at the airport.

Whilst in Trish's care, there were issues with the manner in which the orphans were housed and fed. Orphans were observed hanging on a rug thrown over a sofa, clinging together for warmth under spinning overhead fans, with air-conditioning running, which she told Vicki was for the comfort of the carers, despite some of the orphans being too young to thermo-regulate. Baby-bat feeding sessions with volunteers were witnessed by Vicki, and reported as being a haphazard process with no continuity between carer or animal with different volunteers each shift. There was no attention paid to milk volumes, milk temperature, reference to feeding charts or previous notes on individual animals. This bulk processing of 13 animals was completely unnecessary as individual carers could provide all the care and attention needed in a one-on-one consistent manner. Vicki eventually convinced Trish to distribute the animals out leaving her with only a couple of babies to manage.

Concerns over Trish Wimberley's caring standards and her propensity to hold onto many animals in care, for too long and in conditions we considered sub-standard, had been a concern for us and other groups and carers for some time, hence our identification of Wildcare as a high risk to this project. However we were always willing to give carers the benefit of the doubt, particularly inexperienced ones. As issues arose, Brett Kerr from QPWS requested weekly statistics be sent to him and updates on each animal in care with Wildcare. Vicki Bressan coordinated these reports and outlined all issues and remedial action being taken to bring the animals up to acceptable standard for return to FN Qld.

There was always an expectation that there would be some problems throughout the project and, in particular, working with a large number of carers and carer groups was the biggest challenge. There was a wide variation in caring techniques and standards, and our final report to QPWS identified that there was room for improvement in the hand-raising of orphaned flying-foxes in SE Qld.

## **Returning the Spectacled Flying-foxes to FN Qld**

The juveniles were returned in boxes designed and built by Bob and Jenny James and Vicki and Gary Bressan of Bat Rescue Gold Coast. Their research with various wildlife parks determined the appropriate style of transport, and using the IATA standards, they developed a very cost-effective solution. The box itself is very similar to the one they arrived in, however instead of housing 24 babies easily on two levels, one box housed only 6 juveniles in individual compartments as shown below. In total there were 8 boxes made, 4 made by the Gold Coast branch, and 4 by the Sunshine Coast branch. They were also used to transport the bats from Rockhampton back to FNQ.

All orphans were held in the Tolga Bat Hospital flight aviary for a minimum of 2 weeks before moving to the release cages at the Tolga Scrub. Two Bat Rescue



Management Committee members, myself and the Chairperson, travelled to Cairns with the last airlift of animals and volunteered for a week at Tolga Bat Hospital. It was rewarding to see the fruits of our efforts and assist with the influx of animals to feed, microchip and measure.

The schedule of deliveries back to FN Qld was as follows:

DEPARTURE DATE	NO.
Volunteer at Tolga made own arrangements	4
11 <sup>th</sup> December 2004	22
18 <sup>th</sup> December 2004	11
9 <sup>th</sup> January 2005	30
15 <sup>th</sup> January 2005	13
26 <sup>th</sup> January 2005	7
Deceased	3
<b>TOTAL SFF ORPHANS DESPATCHED</b>	<b>90</b>



Although these bats were being monitored closely, it was impossible to physically visit each carer and look at the condition of each animal. This resulted in some animals needing to be re-fostered into care as they were not yet ready for return to FN Qld. This was simply the problem of dealing with many carers the team had never met before and their different caring practices. Some carers raising multiple young had difficulties achieving good weight gains and behavioural outcomes, and it was most likely a combination of lack of experience and different caring standards. Most carers appreciated the feedback and support we provided. Any problems were identified in time to be rectified and all the 87 orphans were returned fit for crèche and release.

When the juveniles were returned to us from Trish Wimberley, I was shocked to see that they were wrapped up in synthetic polar fleece material and lying in polystyrene boxes. It was a very hot day in the 30's and I asked her why these animals were not hanging in cages but received no plausible explanation. The SFF babies arrived in SE Qld at varying ages, and the juvenile SFFs were returned to FN Qld from between 11-14 weeks of age. At the age of around 6 weeks of age flying-foxes are thermo-regulating, hanging, inverting and no longer requiring wrapping.

When I unwrapped these juveniles I found that they were all beaded with condensation, and I had never seen this before. Their body temperatures seemed elevated, as normal temperature regulation such as fanning and licking was prevented by being wrapped inappropriately for their age and development, and in a synthetic fabric. Fluids were provided immediately and they were transferred to appropriate caging.

I was concerned that fungal infections in the wings may have still been a problem given her clear lack of understanding of adequate housing and transportation requirements. It should also be noted that even at the final stage of presenting her





orphans for return to Tolga, Trish Wimberley had remained steadfast in her refusal to comply with the QPWS requirement to sign an MOU.

Trish never acknowledged advice given to her at the time and has continued with poor animal husbandry ever since. We have never seen any changes or improvements over time, and volunteer wildlife carers with this attitude, particularly in leadership roles or running their own groups, tend to foster poor caring standards with their cohorts. We have had carers over the years join our group who were trained by Trish Wimberley and who subsequently need re-training out of bad habits. These personal experiences with Trish Wimberley have led us to question why her track record as a rule breaker and substandard carer has been repeatedly overlooked, and that she has been enabled to care for wildlife and be granted permits for so many years.

## Conclusions

The transporting of orphaned Spectacled Flying-foxes for their early care, and subsequent return for release, was extremely successful. Transportation of babies and juveniles between FN Qld and SE Qld was appropriate and effective, and the active management and monitoring of animals in care resulted in 87/90 orphans raised in SE Qld being returned to the wild in FN Qld.

The problems we managed with basic caring standards ranged from:

- Poor record keeping
- Poor attention to caring needs
- Behavioural problems in orphans returned (signs of anxiety, e.g. clinging)
- Inappropriate housing and inappropriate transportation method for developmental stage
- Delaying the distribution of orphans to individual carers may have exacerbated these health issues. Trish Wimberley had assured us at the airport when receiving orphans that they would be distributed to carers, yet once in her possession she proved resistant to passing them on. Lack of insight and perception of a problem requiring us to prompt carer into action or take action ourselves.

Some carers clearly lacked experience, or were never trained correctly in the first place, but were receptive to learning and welcomed feedback in most cases. However other carers like Trish Wimberley, elevated to the position of Bat Co-ordinator of Wildcare, presented the biggest challenge to us because she was unaware of any knowledge gaps and refused to improve the deficits in her caring practices.

Bat Rescue Inc. Management Committee are committed to continuous improvement in caring techniques and standards, and the sharing of information with our carers or any other non-member individual or group. However, our organisation is also committed to never again working in collaboration with Trish Wimberley, formerly of Australian Bat Clinic and Wildcare Australia, as her standards of care and apparent



motivation are inconsistent with the code of conduct for wildlife carers and her overall lack of attention to animal welfare considerations is unacceptable. Most importantly, Trish Wimberley does not appear to take advice, seek to improve, or respond to any form of constructive criticism, choosing instead to remain ignorant and ill-informed of evidence-based or best practice care.

Sylvia Hood  
President  
BAT RESCUE INC.

Vicki Bressan  
Former Gold Coast Co-Ordinator  
BAT RESCUE INC.

## **APPENDIX 9**

### **Carer Impact Statements**

- 9.1 Sylvia Hood, Bat Rescue Inc.
- 9.2 Terrie Ridgway
- 9.3 Charmaine Brayley
- 9.4 Nikki Holst
- 9.5 Gabrielle Friebe

## 9.1 S. Hood, Bat Rescue

The removal and processing of over 200 animals from the Australian Bat Clinic & Wildlife Trauma Centre has taken a personal toll on the carers involved in this large-scale operation. The carers not only had to discover the extent of horrific injuries left untreated and preventable conditions allowed to deteriorate over years of neglect, but also witness the severe pain and suffering that was clearly evident in these animals. The signs of pain are typically well understood amongst experienced carers and include vocalisation, aggression, withdrawal and self-mutilation.

Dealing with a large-scale animal welfare case such as this has left some carers suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms, and Bat Rescue Inc. are planning to offer counselling to these carers in order to continue volunteering. Compiling this report has been difficult because it requires reliving the horrors experienced in managing these animals and exposure to even more evidence of the suffering created at this establishment. Contributors to the report acknowledge how difficult it is writing their accounts but feel compelled to persist in the hope of preventing such atrocities in the future.

Some celebrations have been possible with the rehabilitation and release of animals, however these are few and far between, and outweighed by the devastating task of taking animals for euthanasia. One carer had to take small numbers at a time with breaks in between as it was so distressing.

Carers were also put under considerable pressure to keep quiet about the terrible condition of the flying-foxes removed from ABCWTC and some who did attempt to broach discussion of care standards at the establishment were quickly silenced and instead accused of personal attacks on the owner. Enforced secrecy and systematic denial of events are known to compound trauma in witnesses.

The fallout from carers learning the fate of their babies that were lovingly hand-raised in 2014-2015 and then kept in captivity for up to 3 years against all rules and regulations, will be one of the most cruel blows to a dedicated wildlife carer. In good faith, they trusted ABCWTC to care for and release their animals, and the BCRQ committee have the onerous task of sharing the news with these carers, who have every right to know.

BCRQ and Bat Rescue Inc, will need to invest even more time and resources into helping our carers, on top of the financial expense of managing all the animals from ABCWTC over several months of rehabilitation. The creche/release food costs alone, for the animals who made it that far (25% of the total), were over \$10,000.

This may be the largest case of animal hoarding in Australia to date, particularly in a rescue/rehabilitation centre, and authorities need to treat it as such with significant penalties imposed on the owner/operator, Trish Wimberley. Preventing these cases occurring again will require vigilance by authorities and early intervention as this case has been ongoing for at least 15 years, with numerous complaints lodged and largely ignored. Knowing and understanding the extent to which hoarders operate to conceal their problem is essential to future prevention, and we all wish to see this test

case dealt with appropriately and effectively with maximum penalties applied commensurate with the scale of animal cruelty that has now been exposed at ABCWTC.

Sylvia Hood  
President  
BAT RESCUE INC.



## 9.2 Ridgway, T.

My experience with the removal and subsequent care of multiple flying-foxes from the Australian Bat Clinic, under the management and responsibility of Trish Wimberley, began on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2018. On this day, at the property of Mandi Griffiths, I took 32 LRFF's into my care, 4 of these animals had dependent young.

Every animal was severely underweight, and every animal had severe slimy wing, some with untreated fractures and shocking deformations and fingerbone and joint destruction from the side effects of long term, untreated slimy wing.

I immediately contacted the RSPCA and asked their advice on doing emergency assessments on all the LRFF's.

They committed to sending a mobile assessment team to my property. On the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2018, the RSPCA assessed and photographed every animal in my care. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of assessments 13 animals had been euthanised. All 4 females with dependent young were deemed unreleasable due to gross damage and would be euthanised when the dependent young were old enough to be released. One baby died overnight on the 13<sup>th</sup> August. The RSPCA took the poor little body for autopsy. 4 animals went to Denise Wade in Brisbane as they needed ongoing medical treatment and Denise would keep the continuity of care in the hands of the RSPCA team at Wacol. I was left with the remaining mums and bubs (6 animals) and 8 other animals.

This nightmare should never have got this bad. How and why it did must be investigated and it must never happen again. If something in our world of Flying-fox rescue and rehabilitation needs fixing, then so be it. Let's fix it.

This person, in charge of so many animals, was grossly and heartbreakingly irresponsible. Every duty of care was broken. Everybody involved is still outraged and distraught. We are left not knowing who to trust for there were/are many who supported, may still support this person, who will not accept the facts and so we are divided and made far less effective as a result.

Terrie Ridgway

### 9.3 Brayley, C.

On 9/8/18, I was one of several bat carers who gathered at ABCWTC in Advancetown to rescue flying-foxes who needed assistance. I picked up 18 bats on the day. There were six BFF males, three BFF females, seven GHFF males and two GHFF females. All were young adults. All were suffering from severe infection of slimy wing. All were underweight, with a range from slightly underweight to severely underweight. Their coats were dry and harsh to the feel. Many of the blacks had pale brown rings around their eyes. I placed them together in my rehabilitation aviary which is well ventilated and with full direct sunlight all morning. For the first few days, they were listless and did not interact, either with me or each other. Slowly, as they became used to the new environment, they became more animated. Although they were all adults, their behaviour indicated that they were very used to human interaction and were probably hand-reared orphans that had not been released from creche.

#### **Membrane Repair**

On the first day in my care, I started treating the slimy wing infection with Malaseb and after a few treatments, it was fully cured. This took about a week to completely eradicate the open infection on the wing, but the membrane remained hard, thick and leathery and would not stretch out to normal flying range. I started to massage daily each of their wing membranes with moisturising creams with the hope that with gentle stretching and massaging, the membranes would soften and return to normal. This was made easy because the bats would cooperate by lying quietly in my lap while I stretched and manipulated their wing. This was probably an uncomfortable experience for them, but they were very stoic and helpful.

#### **Weight and Coat Condition**

At first I fed them with plain fruits but I slowly introduced high protein supplements to their diet and quickly saw an improvement in their weight. As their diet improved, their coat returned to the soft and shiny condition usual for bats. The coat colour darkened and the pale eye rings were being replaced by darker hair. Once they were out of pain from the slimy wing infection and were well fed, their personalities started to appear and they became playful and cheeky.

After three weeks, I had taken them as far as I could in my rehab aviary and it was time to reassess them. I sent a couple of pregnant females to a carer with a large flight aviary and they were kept there until the birth of their babies. Six had swollen joints as a result of the membrane being stretched tight and pulling the bones out of place. I transferred these to a vet nurse and I am not certain of their fate. The remaining bats were transferred to our creche aviary for flight practice. Every one failed the initial flight test but it was decided to keep them there to see if it was possible for them to stretch out their wings if they had time to practice. Unfortunately, in the end, almost all were euthanased as their membranes could not recover from the long period of neglect with slimy wing.

To have to kill these beautiful young bats was devastating. These were trusting hand-raised babies who had known only love and care before being placed at ABCWTC where they were neglected and ignored and where they suffered from preventable infections and starvation. Even after being rescued from these conditions, these deprivations could not be overcome. We returned them to full health and restored their broken spirits but nothing could be done for the membranes. Vale little ones.

Charmaine Brayley

#### **9.4 Holst, N.**

My name is Nikki Holst and I have been a flying fox carer for the last 8 years. When I heard that the Australian Bat Clinic run by Trish Wimberley was closing I was relieved that finally the mass number of flying foxes in the facility would be hopefully released. When I received 12 of the hundreds that I had seen there, I presumed they would be releasable but heartbreakingly not. They all had slimy wing, some so badly that they had developed scarring on their wing membrane decreasing their mobility. They were all extremely hungry and underweight and some had been so young they were orphans who had never been released.

I was up at Australia Zoo with another animal when I saw carers from south Brisbane which I rarely saw, so I asked them why they had come all this way, only to be told Trish Wimberley was there collecting 30 spectacled flying-fox orphans. I was horrified this was happening as other bats that had been in her care were being taken there to be euthanized as they were unreleasable. And here she was, given 30 more orphans, from a species well out of their geographical range, and their fate unknown.

This raises many questions for me and others in the wildlife rehabilitation community. Was there even a permit granted to Ms Wimberley to have these animals so far out of their geographical range, which is Far North Queensland? I know this type of operation has been done before, but under strict and specific permits and conditions from the EPA. With ABCWTC now closed following a steady stream of complaints regarding her poor caring practices, how is this behaviour allowed to continue?

Please, I hope this is investigated for the sake of our wildlife.

Yours Sincerely  
Nikki Holst

## 9.5 Friebe, G.

Gabrielle Friebe  
Batavia Flying Fox Sanctuary  
Woodford Qld 4514  
(Postal address: PO Box 429, Yandina Qld 4561)

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

In September 2018 approximately 85 Flying Foxes (both Grey-headed Flying-foxes and Black Flying-foxes) confiscated from Australian Bat Clinic run by Trish Wimberly were brought to Batavia Flying Fox Sanctuary for pre-release conditioning.

The animals ranged from young adults, pregnant young females and other mature adults.

Despite having been in rehabilitation for 6 weeks following their removal from Australian Bat Clinic these animals still showed signs of poor condition: their fur was discoloured due to nutritional deficiency, some were still underweight and they were easily stressed. It was a very emotional time for me seeing and working with so many damaged animals.

I split the animals into two groups in two adjacent flight aviaries and decided to just care for them to help them settle down from their recent traumas. Initially they fought over food as I was feeding them however, once they realized there was always more food than they could manage and plenty for everyone, this behavior changed.

Initially they all bunched together and did not move however once they realised they had room to move and stretch in the sunshine, this behaviour changed and the animals became more adventurous and displayed 'closer' to normal Flying Fox behavior.

After months in the flight aviary I started test flying each bat to determine flight ability. Out of the 85 animals 33 could not fly or attain appropriate lift. 99% of these were small adults that displayed no injuries from barbed-wire rescues or fruit netting. From experience they appeared to be unreleased orphans from the past two seasons.

It was a totally soul-destroying experience to take these lovely animals that should have been flying free up to Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital to determine why they could not attain lift and fly. 33 animals meant I had to make 10 trips to the Wildlife Hospital at a great time and fuel expense but 100% worse than any of that was the emotional trauma each trip had on me. I felt like a hearse and a traitor as all of the 33 animals were euthanased because of wing damage from chronic, treatable conditions.

These lovely animals had suffered so much in the care of Trish Wimberley and lost their lives because of her neglect. It is so disrespectful to our work to see this gross abuse by a person that seems to be consulted by councils, wildlife groups and wildlife hospitals for flying-fox expertise and who also offers training courses for new bat carers.

I have been a wildlife carer for over 40 years with 15 years running Batavia Flying Fox Sanctuary and Long Grass Nature Refuge. EPA have stated to me that Batavia was the

best facility and the best managed pre-release facility in South East Qld they have seen. I have personally managed a stringent rehabilitation and release program for hundreds of flying-foxes every year and to see animals in this state from a respected facility totally burnt me out.

I no longer look after wildlife or work with wildlife carers. I have lost faith in the system as the system let this animal abuse continue for many more years longer that it should have. If this facility had been a puppy farm something would have been done but as it was wildlife NOTHING was done in a timely manner.

Animal abuse is not on and ABC, and Trish Wimberley in particular, should never be allowed near any animal.

Yours sincerely

Gabrielle Friebe  
28 August 2019





## **APPENDIX 10**

### **Draft Protocol for Intervention at Flying-fox Camps During Abandonment or Orphaning Events (2011)**

# PROTOCOL FOR INTERVENTION AT FLYING FOX CAMPS DURING ABANDONMENT OR ORPHANING EVENTS

## 1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this protocol is to provide standards and guidelines for the rescue and rehabilitation of abandoned and orphaned flying-foxes from flying fox camps in the wild. The protocol aims to ensure that human intervention at wild flying fox camps provides a *net benefit for wildlife welfare and conservation*, and avoids ecological harm and prolonged or increased suffering of animals. Compliance with this protocol is required for compliance with the *Code of Practice for the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned native animals in Queensland*. Also section 88C 3-6 of the Nature Conservation Act which states that flying-foxes must not be driven away or disturbed at their roost

<http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/N/NatureConA92.pdf>

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of any intervention into a wild flying fox camp, for the purposes of rescue and care of orphaned and abandoned dependent young are:

1. To relieve the suffering of orphaned and/or abandoned dependent young;
2. To contribute to the conservation of native animals;
3. To avoid further unnecessary disturbance to compromised animals or the colony generally.
4. To determine why these events occur, thus avoid future occurrences where possible

## 3. MATTERS CONSIDERED:

The formulation of a document, such as this, must be based on scientific evidence and fact, the opinions of experts, and ethical considerations. In preparing this document a variety of relevant factors and opinions was considered, including:

1. That the causes of mass mortality, abandonment and orphaning events may not always be apparent, and may be natural, anthropogenic or a combination of both;
2. That ill-considered or ill-informed intervention may increase ecological harm and increase the suffering of affected animals;



### Louise

The Australasian Bat Society have adopted a hyphenated flying-fox to be the correct usage of the words. FFICN members disputed the words camp and colony and established a camp is a temporary roost and a colony is a permanent roost. Hope this helps.



### Louise

I believe this is important to add in the purpose – perhaps needs to be copied and pasted here!

3. That there is a community expectation that the suffering of animals will be responded to and relieved as much as possible;
4. That the long term benefits, or otherwise, of rescuing and rehabilitating orphaned and/or abandoned dependent flying foxes are unknown;
5. That the disturbance to a flying fox colony, particularly to nursing mothers, caused by well-meaning intervention, may exacerbate the effects of an initial impact;
6. That nursing mothers may leave dependent young alone for periods of up to three days, and hence all unattended dependent young are not necessarily abandoned or orphaned.
7. That the impacts of human activity on flying foxes are severe, and that efforts to rescue, rehabilitate and release abandoned and orphaned young may contribute significantly to their conservation, irrespective of whether the cause is natural or anthropogenic.
8. That the grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) is classified as "vulnerable" under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
9. That some mortality/orphaning events in flying fox colonies might be caused by, or associated with, potentially zoonotic infections that pose a significant risk to humans with known, as yet undescribed, pathogens.

#### 4. GENERAL PROVISIONS:

1. The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) is the agency responsible for the protection of wildlife and the environment. A DERM Officer, preferably the local DERM Ranger in Charge (wildlife), should be notified as soon as is practicable after the detection of an event potentially requiring the rescue of abandoned or orphaned flying foxes from a wild colony. DERM must be contacted prior to entry into and under a flying-fox colony with dependant young.
2. All persons involved in the rescue, handling and rehabilitation of flying foxes must maintain current immunisation against rabies and tetanus. Immunisation against Q-fever is highly recommended.
3. Any intervention into a wild flying fox camp must be coordinated and supervised by an appropriately experienced person approved for that purpose by DERM.
4. Rehabilitation of flying foxes must be in accordance with the provisions of the *Code of practice for the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned protected animals in Queensland*.
5. The capacity of wildlife rehabilitation organisations and individuals to care is finite, and limited by available resources and people. A pragmatic approach to triage and euthanasia must be adopted when the capacity to care is reached or exceeded. A network of Flying-fox carers exists even across borders and should be utilized for best placement of orphans into a limited number of animals in care which is optimal for mental and physical development.
6. A person in charge of a rescued animal has a statutory duty of care, under the provisions of the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*, to provide for its needs, including the provision of appropriate veterinary care and euthanasia when required.

#### 5. PROTOCOL FOR RESCUE OF ABANDONED AND ORPHANED FLYING FOXES FROM A WILD FLYING FOX CAMP:

##### L Louise

On prior occasions babies have been seen on the outside of camps or on road or dropped in low vegetation this is when authorities need to be contacted not after people have gone in by themselves.

##### L Louise

Which needs extensive work in relation to flying-foxes, I believe this is currently being reviewed

##### L Louise

Flying-fox young have very little interaction with other young in the wild until crèche then it's limited until independently flying and they have an adoring devoted mother – baby bats need individual attention or they become social misfits. We have witnessed this when animals are not given enough individual nurturing – this also applies as a duty of care

1. A decision to intervene in a detected orphaning or abandonment event must be based on the informed judgment of a suitably experienced person, and preferably in consultation with an appropriate officer of DERM.
2. Intervention to rescue unattended flying fox dependent young from a camp may only occur when there is clear evidence for orphaning or abandonment, and/or mass mortality is likely without intervention.
3. For each camp/event, an Incident Controller (IC) must be appointed in consultation with DERM. The Incident Controller will be responsible for coordination and logistics of the rescue effort, communication with DERM and/or other stakeholders, and accurate recording of data as required in section 6 below.
4. Prior to any rescue effort, the IC must confirm that each person assisting with the rescue is currently immunised against rabies and tetanus, and is sufficiently experienced in the handling of flying foxes.
5. Prior to any rescue effort, when practicable, the IC must make arrangements with a registered veterinarian to conduct veterinary assessments and treatment of rescued animals.
6. Prior to any rescue effort, the IC must appoint another appropriately experienced person to monitor disturbance to flying foxes in the camp, during the rescue effort. This person must only monitor disturbance, and must not be directly involved in the rescue of dependent young. When another appropriately experienced person is not available, the IC may also monitor the disturbance to the camp, but may not then be involved directly in the rescue of orphaned or abandoned dependent young.
7. Monitoring of a camp must occur for a minimum of 10 minutes prior to disturbance or entry by rescuers, for the entire period during which rescuers are near or within a camp, and for a minimum of 10 minutes after the last rescuer has left the camp and the near vicinity of the camp.
8. Any person or persons entering a camp, or the near vicinity of a camp must keep noise and disturbance to a minimum. Each person entering a camp must have a direct means of communication with the IC and person appointed to monitor disturbance, such as a 2-way radio or mobile telephone, or alternatively, must maintain a quiet talking distance from a person with direct communication.
9. The IC and/or person monitoring disturbance may at any time abort the rescue effort if, in their judgment, the disturbance to flying foxes within the camp is sufficient to cause significant risk of further abandonment of young.
10. A dependent young may only be rescued if it is:
  - a. On the ground
  - b. Visibly ill or injured
  - c. Hanging low enough in vegetation to be reached without the assistance of a pole.
11. A dependent young that is alone, but out of reach without the assistance of a pole, may have its position marked using flagging tape, and be checked up to three times each day. If there is no evidence of feeding by the mother over three days, and/ or the animal meets the criteria in section 10 above, it may be rescued, with the assistance of a pole, if necessary.
12. All rescued animals must be triaged, preferably at the time of rescue, or within one hour of rescue by a suitably experienced flying fox carer and/or experienced wildlife veterinarian and categorised as:
  - a. Requiring immediate veterinary care or euthanasia (T1)
  - b. Requiring non-urgent veterinary care (within 8 hours) (T2)
  - c. Apparently healthy or otherwise not requiring veterinary care (T3)
13. All rescued animals must be weighed and their forearm length measured at the time of triage assessment.

**L Louise**

I'm concerned about independence of this suitable person, who is this person? If one care group may not see another members actions as inappropriate due to lack of knowledge. Who one care group sees as suitably experienced another group may not, there is no way to check integrity from group to group either. Perhaps this needs to be an established flying-fox savvy DERM or RSPCA employee

**L Louise**

Same as my previous comment – will it be all members of the same group who coordinate? There is a very big shortage of TRUE flying-fox knowledgeable people – I think these people need to be established now and be on call for future events and they need to be independent of any care group – this will be difficult and a big loop hole

**L Louise**

Sounds like there needs to be an independent task force of trusted and reliable people who can work as a team and be trained for such events

**L Louise**

The trouble with SEQ colonies is that there are layers of hierarchy the black hang above in the tops the grays have been moved to the lower roosts in the colony – many colonies you are not able to move around under due to thick understory therefore rescue attempts would not be possible at all without major disturbance.

**L Louise**

Absolutely right

**L Louise**

Yes agreed

**L Louise**

ONLY Without undue disturbance to other bats

**L Louise**

True orphans should show significant weight loss at this stage

14. All rescued animals must be individually identified by an approved method (Appendix 1).
15. All rescued T1 and T2 bats must be promptly assessed and treated by an experienced wildlife veterinarian, whenever practicable, or euthanased by an approved method (Appendix 2).
16. Rescued T3 bats may be admitted as "healthy" admissions, and hand-reared in accordance with standard practice. It must be recognised that T3 bats may deteriorate to T2 or T1 category at any time in care; and at that time appropriate veterinary care must be provided.
17. Records must be kept in accordance with section 6 Record Keeping below, and provided to DERM on request.

## 6. RECORD KEEPING:

1. The IC must arrange for the recording of data at the time of rescue, or as soon as is practicable thereafter. Such data must include, for each animal:
  - a. A unique number or other identification;
  - b. The species;
  - c. The sex;
  - d. The weight in grams;
  - e. The forearm length in millimeters;
  - f. The body condition as excellent, good, fair, poor, emaciated;
  - g. The triage category: T1, T2 or T3 if alive; or D if dead at the time of triage;
  - h. Whether the animal was on the ground or in vegetation, and, if in vegetation, at what approximate height.
  - i. Whether the animal was euthanased, or admitted for care.
2. Within one month of the start of an incident, the IC must arrange for the preparation of a *Flying Fox Incident Report*, comprised of a collation of the data described in section 1 above, plus, for each animal, a final outcome, designated as:
  - a. Died in care;
  - b. Euthanased;
  - c. Currently in care;
  - d. Referred to another person or organisation, and to whom.
3. On request, the IC must supply to an authorized Conservation Officer of DERM or RSPCA Qld the completed *Flying Fox Incident Report*.

### L Louise

We used to microchip but we now believe this too cruel, 1 out of 5 went missing and we have quite a few returns with abscesses at neck site. We now use the #7 ABBS approved (plastic) bands, these are more expensive if numbered but should be purchased and on hand for such emergencies. Metal ABBS bands used on released with the right approvals

### L Louise

Sometimes carers are used to raise young after these events who are inappropriately trained and inexperienced – this must be avoided if at all possible –

### L Louise

Perhaps this should be given to RSPCA or DERM on release of the bats then a more complete history will be available.