

# Bat Tourism in the Scenic Rim

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# Values of the Scenic Rim

- ❖ World Heritage Gondwana rainforests
- ❖ Third highest biodiversity in Australia
- ❖ Volcanic history
- ❖ Spectacular mountainous scenery
- ❖ Outstanding examples of evolutionary history



## Why Bats?



- ❖ 25% of Australian mammal species are bats
- ❖ 80 Bat species in Australia
- ❖ 30 + bat species in Scenic Rim\*
- ❖ 39% of mammal species in Scenic Rim
- ❖ Includes 3 out of 4 mainland flying-foxes

\* Wildnet Qld

# Bat tourism - in your face



- ❖ Flying-foxes are highly visible
- ❖ Flying-foxes live in cities, regional towns and “natural areas”
- ❖ They hang in trees during the day
- ❖ Evening flyouts of both flying-foxes and cave bats are spectacular
  
- ❖ Bat Tourism is an economically viable industry in the USA
- ❖ All it needs in Australia is buy-in from local host communities
- ❖ Interpretation and marketing are key to changing perceptions and gaining host community support

# Bat tourism economics

## Congress Avenue Bridge, Austin



- ❖ Largest urban bat population in world
- ❖ 150,000 tourists a year- just for bats
- ❖ \$1.5m in direct revenue from bats
- ❖ People gather in hundreds and thousands just to see the emergence
- ❖ Bat tours by boat
- ❖ Annual Bat festival
- ❖ Bats are now a cultural identity of Austin
- ❖ Nearby places are capitalising on bats

# No touch No risk

## FEAR NOT!

Many people are afraid of Flying-foxes. This is because a tiny number of Flying-foxes may carry Lyssavirus. This is a disease related to the rabies virus.

People will **not** be exposed to Lyssavirus when Flying-foxes fly overhead, when they roost or feed in garden trees, or even from touching their droppings. Lyssavirus can only be transmitted through bites or scratches. Any Flying-fox on its own during the day, on or near to the ground, could be in trouble. A Flying-fox in pain or afraid will react like any other animal in similar circumstances – it could bite or scratch.

**IF YOU ENCOUNTER A SICK, INJURED or ORPHANED FLYING-FOX, DO NOT APPROACH OR HANDLE IT. SIMILARLY IF YOU SEE A FLYING-FOX HANGING ON ELECTRICITY WIRES, please call the QUEENSLAND PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICES on 07-5520 9602.** Between the months of September and January, when females are carrying their young, babies often survive the electric shocks that kill their mothers on power lines and can be hidden in the folds of her wings.

Black Flying-fox  
(*Pteropus alecto*) with dependant  
young on Native Bush  
Cherry (*Syzygium australe*)

Artwork by Louise Saunders.  
© 2004 Bat Rescue Inc.

Bat Rescue Inc.  
Gold Coast

gold convention and  
coast exhibition centre

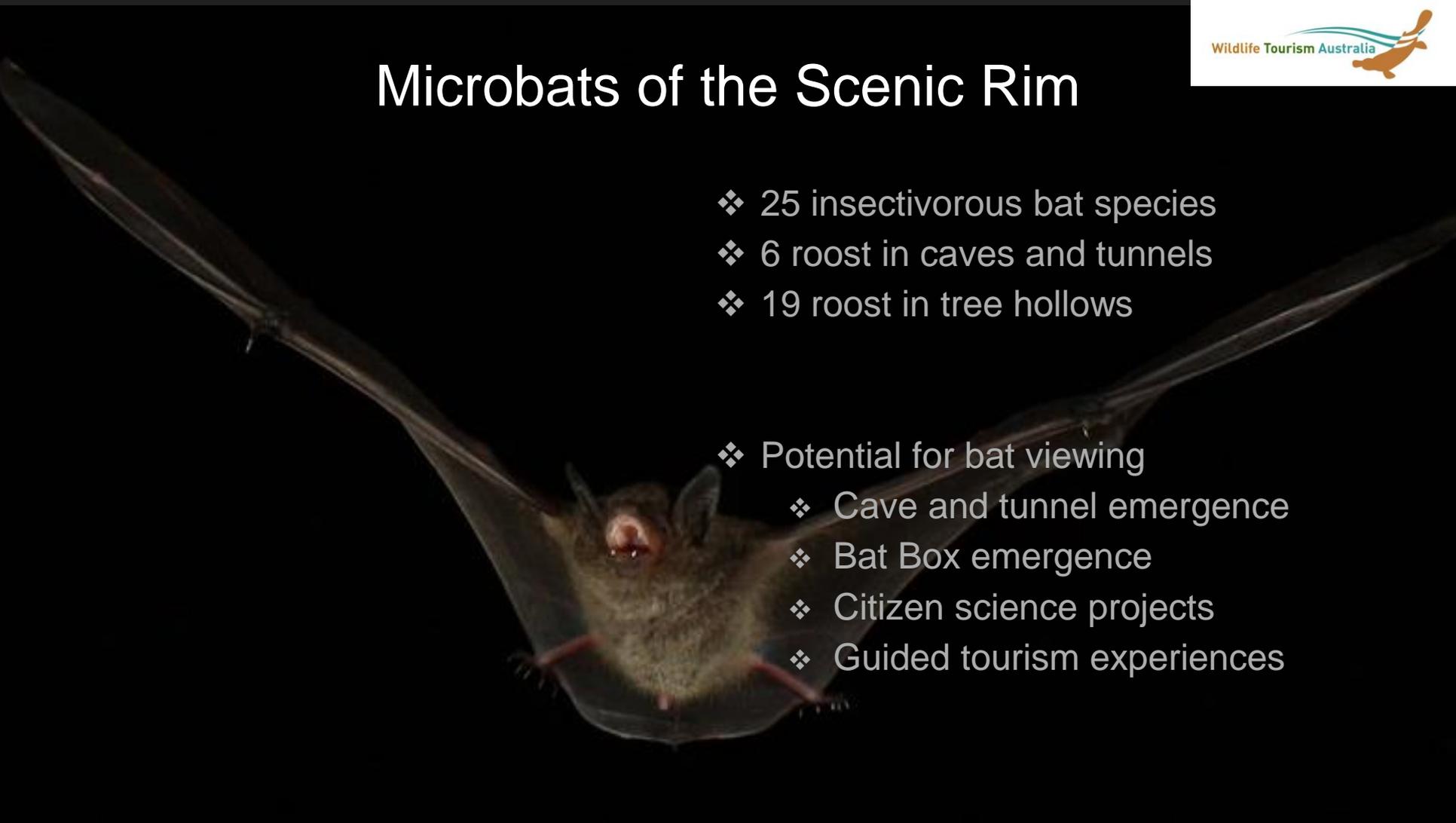


- ❖ Interpretation is key to risk messaging
- ❖ Risk avoidance behaviour is encouraged when positive messages are given with risk warnings
- ❖ People can only get Australian Bat lyssavirus (ABL) from a bite or scratch from an infected animal
- ❖ **If you don't touch a flying-fox there is no risk**
- ❖ Risk of Hendra transmission is minimised by managing where and when horses graze, covering water troughs and vaccination

If you see any bat in trouble, ring a local wildlife care organisation or RSPCA, and a vaccinated carer will rescue the bat

# Microbats of the Scenic Rim

- ❖ 25 insectivorous bat species
- ❖ 6 roost in caves and tunnels
- ❖ 19 roost in tree hollows
  
- ❖ Potential for bat viewing
  - ❖ Cave and tunnel emergence
  - ❖ Bat Box emergence
  - ❖ Citizen science projects
  - ❖ Guided tourism experiences



# Flying-foxes of the Scenic Rim

Black Flying-fox ( <i>Pteropus alecto</i> )	Grey-headed Flying-fox ( <i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i> )	Little Red Flying-fox ( <i>Pteropus scapulatus</i> )
 <p>Photo: Vivien Jones</p>	 <p>Photo: Nick Edards</p>	 <p>Photo: Vivien Jones</p>
		
700–1000 g	600–1000 g	300–600 g
Hall unpublished 2011		

3 of 4 mainland flying-foxes *plus*  
*Nyctimene robinsoni*  
(Tube-nosed bat)



and  
*Syconycteris australis*  
(eastern blossom bat)



# Flying-fox Camps



Scenic Rim Regional Council  
Flying-fox Strategy

Flying-fox Roost Locations

- Active
- Not Currently Active

Disclaimer  
Scenic Rim Regional Council and the State of Queensland do not guarantee the reliability of the information contained herein nor of it being suitable for any particular purpose and disclaims liability for any loss that may arise from the use of or reliance upon such information.

Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA 94)



0 1.5 3 6 9 12 Kilometres

- ❖ 10 active camps
- ❖ 3 continuous
  - Canungra (Beechmont Rd)
  - Flinders Peak
  - Tamborine National Park
- ❖ 6 occasional
- ❖ 1 temporary



# Interpretation



## Introducing Flying foxes the forest's best friend!

### Meet the family

Three species of flying fox are found in southern Queensland.

The grey-headed flying fox is found along the coast of Australia from Bundaberg in Queensland to Victoria. It is listed as a 'vulnerable' species – because numbers have declined, as much of its feeding habitat has been cleared.



### Making a living

We love eucalypt blossoms and many rainforest fruits. Our magnificent eucalypt forests and World Heritage rainforests wouldn't be the same without us.



### Setting up camp

Our camps provide a reasonably safe place for us to breed and rest each day. We used to live in fewer, larger camps, but many of them were cleared for development.

We may travel hundreds of kilometres in search of food. Sometimes the numbers in our camps increase when other flying foxes migrate through or when favourite food trees are in flower close-by, but this doesn't last long.



Hi! I'm a flying fox. I use my good sense of smell and sight to find food.



Grey-headed flying fox  
*Pteropus poliocephalus*



Black flying fox  
*Pteropus alecto*



Little red flying fox  
*Pteropus scapulatus*

# Existing Flying-fox Tourism in Australia

Adelaide



Cairns



Melbourne



Brisbane



and more

# Bat Tourism Trail app

## The Great Australian Bat Tourism Trail

a joint project by Australasian Bat Society and Wildlife Tourism Australia

ausbattrail@gmail.com



Download on the  
**App Store**



## Scenic Rim Flying-foxes



The Scenic Rim has ten active camps. Three are occupied most of the year: Canungra (Beechmont Rd), Flinders Peak and Tamborine National Park. Other occasional and temporary camps can be found at times throughout the region (see [map](#)). Refer to the [Scenic Rim Regional council](#) for details of where and when bats can be seen. View camp at daytime or watch the evening flyout. Guided wildlife tours featuring flying-foxes in the Scenic Rim include [Araucaria Ecotours](#).

# Up close and personal - the virtual way



# Tourism Survey



## Cairns Tourism survey

### Preliminary findings

- ❖ Bats are a great tourism attraction and should be promoted more
- ❖ Bats are fascinating
- ❖ Flying-fox camps should be protected

Respondents wanted to know more about flying-foxes  
They were interested in finding out about their local bats

# Tourist Feedback



**FLYING FOXES**  
living under one sky

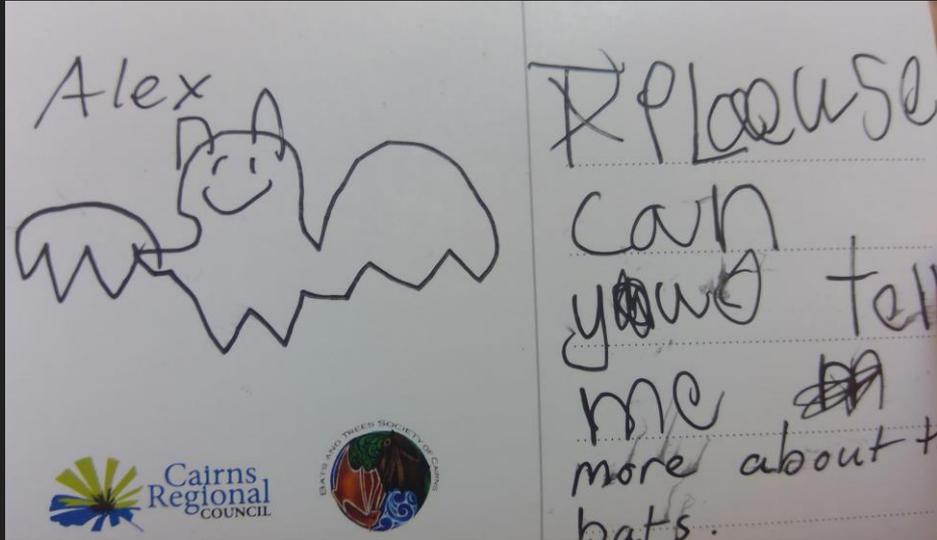
**SCHOOL HOLIDAY BAT CHATS**

**DID YOU KNOW...**  
A FLYING-FOX CAN DISPERSE  
A FIG-SEED BOKM  
FROM ITS PARENT TREE?

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE **SPECTACLED FLYING-FOX** FROM OUR  
TRAINED GUIDES EACH WEEKEND OF THE OLD SCHOOL HOLIDAYS.  
STAY TO WATCH THE **AMAZING FLY-OUT** AT SUNDOWN.

**FREE** EACH FRIDAY, SATURDAY, & SUNDAY **OLD SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**  
FROM 5:30PM (6PM DECEMBER/JANUARY) TILL SUNDOWN  
CORNER OF APLIN ST & LAKE ST IN CAIRNS LIBRARY GROUNDS

- ❖ Seeing big bats in the city is a surprise
- ❖ Most people find out by accident
- ❖ Some people find out at their hotel
- ❖ Some people know already from friends who have been here
- ❖ Some people come to Cairns especially to see the flying-foxes in the city



- People who attended Bat Chats liked
- ❖ The interpretation from experts
  - ❖ The evening flyout
  - ❖ Daytime behaviour



# Social media



# Visitor Quotes

## Araucaria Ecotours, Qld

- ❖ “ Flyout from Ipswich colony (about 250,000 bats) was the highlight of the three days of wildlife viewing”- general comment from tourists 2006 – 2009
- ❖ One night we watched the flight from the Canungra colony, and an English guest said with a sense of wonder in his voice "you know, I sit and look into my garden at dusk most evenings hoping to see maybe one or two tiny bats flit through. I never thought I'd ever be watching hundreds upon hundreds of bats this size flying over!“
- ❖ Often while watching the Indooroopilly colony our guests would get excited as the first one or two flew towards us across the river. "Gee, aren't they big!" was a common exclamation, and this alone was enough to excite them. Then a dozen would come, then a hundred, then thousands, and our guests would be awe-struck.

# Australasian Bat Night and other events

**Australasian Bat Night**  
*March, April and May*  
<http://ausbats.org/australasian-bat-night>  
 Contact: batnight@ausbats.org.au

An annual bat-themed program of community events coordinated by the Australasian Bat Society

Modelled on European Bat Night, the Australasian Bat Night program began with a handful of events in 2012, and by 2018 had grown to over 100 events in all Australian states and New Zealand.

**Raising awareness and promoting appreciation of bats throughout Australasia**

- Community engagement: Local events engage with local communities
- Partnerships: Local governments and departments, landcare, bat & other community groups, scouts, artists, museums, zoos & parks, schools & individuals
- Education: Learning from bat experts. Debunking myths. Participating in research projects
- Fun: Family and kid friendly. Craft & games. Enjoyable bat picnics. Memorable flyouts

**Bat Night Resources**

Experienced speakers for general bat talks & walks or specialist talks on latest research

Bat Night presentation materials & templates, photos etc.

Printed Bat Facts, stickers and materials for children's activities

Including for Bat talks and walks, Flyout permits, Bat houses as well as Bat box, monitoring & citizen science projects

The Australasian Bat Society works with local communities to raise public awareness about bats, their habitats and conservation needs.

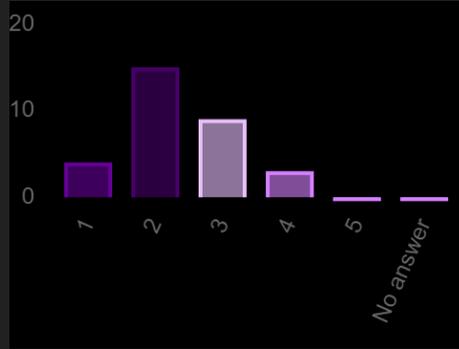
An appreciation and understanding of bats can help people to live with bats.

The Australasian Bat Night program is helping to create a more bat ecologically literate community.

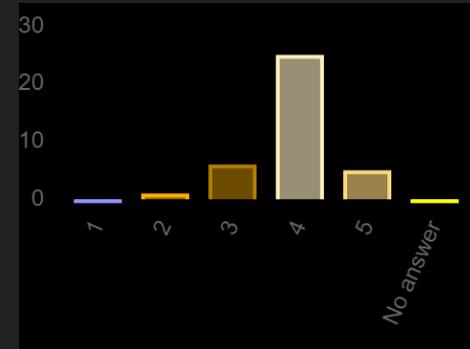
Photo credits and acknowledgements: Australasian Bat Society, Centennial Parklands, Lisa Coetzer, Amber Douglas (Shelby Design), Mikayla Jensen, Michael Anthony, Louise Davden, Tracy Greenway, Judith Wellington, David Wright.

Australasian Bat Society ausbats.org.au

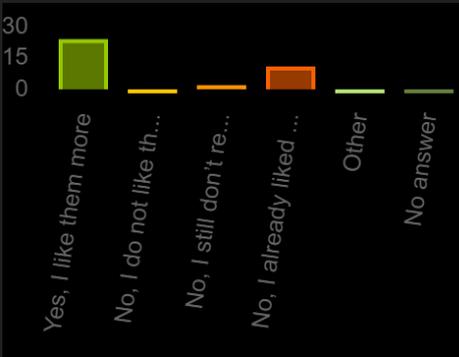
37 responses  
 Knowledge before



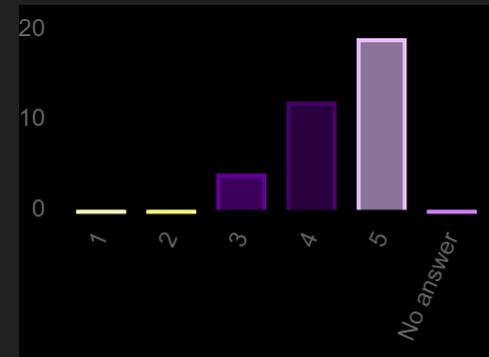
After



Have your views changed?



How useful was the information in understanding bats and people?



- Survey of participants
- Target audience: Local residents and visitors

# Inspiring visitors to act



- ❖ Raising awareness
- ❖ Australasian Bat night, bat chats, bat festivals or other event or guided tour
- ❖ Bat Watch projects: e.g: Save Our Spectacled Flying-fox
- ❖ Tree planting programs – e.g. 23,000 trees
- ❖ Habitat Restoration
- ❖ Caring for bats

# Value adding with interpretation

