

1. **Bat tourism in the Scenic rim.** Title page: Potential of bat tourism in the Scenic rim
2. **Values of the Scenic rim:** The Scenic Rim is a world heritage destination. So why are we interested in bats? Globally, bats make up 20% of the world's mammal species. In Australia, one quarter of mammal species are bats. Of the 80 species in Australia, at least 30 are found in the Scenic Rim, constituting 39% of all mammals in the region. This makes them a very important component of the fauna
3. **Bat tourism- in your face:** Most Australian mammals are nocturnal- often quite cryptic. But flying-foxes are highly visible by day and by night. Social behaviour can be seen during the day and evening flyouts are spectacular. Evening flyouts of cave bats and of some tree roosts (if in a known location) can also be amazing viewing experience. Bat Tourism model is economically viable, with the best examples from the USA. There is a product, there is demand from tourists, the potential for bat tourism in Australia is there. All it needs is buy in from the host community. Interpretation and marketing are key to gaining host community support.
4. **Bat tourism economics:** Bat Tourism can make money. The example of Austin Texas. Refer slide. \$250m in direct revenue. About \$10m per year including indirect revenue (accommodation etc) into local economy. Diversity of tourism around bats including annual festival. Bats are now cultural identity of Austin, and nearby places, such as San Antonio, are now also capitalising on bats with local products named after the Free-tail bat. The potential is there for Australian regions. If only we can get over our prejudices and fears.
5. **No touch No risk:** What about risk of viral transmission? Could bat tourism be unsafe in Australia? Less than 1% of free-living bats, including flying-foxes, carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus, related to rabies. It can only be contracted by a bite or scratch from an infected animal. There is no risk if bats (any bat) are not touched. Any bat in trouble, on or close to the ground, may be ill (likelihood of a communicable disease is low but of being bitten is high) but should not be handled by non-vaccinated persons. Vaccinated carers can be contacted through the nearest wildlife care group, RSPCA or Qld Parks and Wildlife to care for injured or orphaned bats. If you are accidentally bitten by any bat, wash wound with soap and water for five minutes and see a doctor or visit hospital asap for post-exposure vaccination. Hendra virus, which can be carried by flying-foxes only, is manageable through good husbandry of horses and vaccination. Since the vaccine for horses was introduced, only un-vaccinated horses have contracted Hendra virus and the number of incidences of spill-over to horses has drastically reduced. Fear of disease was a concern in Austin Texas too, when the free-tailed bats took up residence under the bridge. Bat education and community engagement changed attitudes through promoting positive messages with the risk warnings (proven to increase compliance of risk avoidance behaviour without demonising bats) and tourism did the rest, turning the presence of bats into an asset.
6. **Microbats of the Scenic Rim:** What are the species of the Scenic Rim that could be promoted for tourism? Of the 25 insectivorous bat species, six roost in caves or man-made structures like tunnels. There is potential for bat viewing of nightly emergences from some of these. If a large tree roost is known, for eg an old tree with many hollows, this can also provide amazing viewing opportunities of the night-time emergence and can be added to stag watching for other species in a spotlight walk. Guided tours using bat detectors to discover bats on spot-lighting walks will detect foraging bats while observing other nocturnal animals of Scenic Rim. There are even opportunities to use bat boxes that can be set up by conservation groups at eco-lodges or other properties as citizen science projects to

view nightly emergences from the bat boxes as a tourist attraction. Exemplars exist in Western Australia. “BatMan” Joe Tonga has set up microbat boxes on his property and invites tourists to watch the nightly emergence.

7. ***Flying-foxes of the Scenic Rim:*** There are five species of flying-foxes and their relatives in the Scenic Rim. Although the smaller Nyctimene and blossom bats are cryptic they may be observed during a spotlight walk, although will not be detected using a bat detector. Calls however are audible. But the three flying-fox species lend themselves to both self-guided touring and guided tours.
8. ***Flying-fox Camps:*** There are 10 known camps of flying-foxes in the Scenic rim. All of these are suitable for bat tourism when flying-foxes are present. The most consistent site is Canungra. Interpretive signage can assist self-guided touring and guided tours can give extra value when viewing flying-fox camps by interpreting the behaviour of the flying-foxes. Interpretive signage of lesser used, seasonal and occasional camps can explain camp movements and absences and give reference to where people can find out more.
9. ***Interpretation:*** Interpretive signage at a site may consist of a series of signs each giving a particular key message, beginning with a general sign. The example given on the left is from a self-guided walk along the colony in Yarra Bend Melbourne. The sign on the right is a good example of a stand-alone sign and can be easily adapted for camps in the Scenic Rim, including explaining the movements of flying-foxes and usage of camps.
10. ***Existing Flying-fox Tourism in Australia:*** There are many examples of flying-fox tourism in Australia, Self-guided Bat ramble (Adelaide); Bat Chats (Cairns); Batty Boat cruises (Brisbane); Yarra Bend guided tours (Melbourne). The Bat Ramble consists of a series of fun facts alongside the river overlooking the bat camp. In Yarra Bend, in addition to the self-guided trail, guided tours by volunteer rangers are given during summer and other peak visiting times. This gives added value as questions can be asked of the guides which may not be covered by the extensive signage. In Cairns, flying-fox flyouts can be seen every evening but during school holidays Bat chats by experienced guides are also given. In Brisbane, guided tours by boat are taken to see the flyout during the summer months and often guests can meet a baby flying-fox. Guided walks are also held at Centennial Park in Sydney and elsewhere.
11. ***Bat tourism Trail App:*** How can people find out where to see flying-foxes? The Bat Tourism trail is under development and will be launched 2020 at Wildlife tourism Australia conference. This app will work in conjunction with other wildlife touring guides, such as bird watching guides and the Kangaroo Trail. Users click onto a specific place and a field pops up with a map of local camps, when bats are present, links to more information such as local council websites or local community bat conservation groups, and to local tourism operators who feature bats in their itineraries. Refer to slide for the mock-up of how the Scenic Rim entry could look in the bat tourism app.
12. ***Up close and personal- the virtual way:*** Viewing a camp with thousands of bats is fascinating. Watching a flyout is spectacular. But for creating empathy, nothing beats seeing a flying-fox up close as on some Batty boat cruises in Brisbane or in bat hospitals open to the public or other venues with bats on exhibit. None of these however is available in the Scenic Rim. But virtual reality technology can allow people to get close to bats safely and experience what it is like to be a bat. A 3D Virtual experience is under development and will be trialled in Cairns before being made available for other regions adding a new dimension to Bat tourism.
13. ***Tourism Survey:*** Most international visitors to Australia have not seen big bats. A bat camp is a big surprise. Often it is an unexpected highlight of a trip to

Australia. Common comments include “We didn’t know about these bats, we came for the reef, it was good, but this is an unexpected highlight of our trip. We must tell everybody back home.” A tourism survey in Cairns has shown that tourists, both international and domestic, think flying-fox camps are good tourism. Even more importantly from a conservation viewpoint, they want to know more about flying-foxes and finding out about their local bats (small or large) when they get back home.

14. **Tourist Feedback:** Tourism survey outcomes. While there has been no big campaigns promoting bat tourism opportunity in Cairns, and while most people find out about the camp by accident, there is a growing number of people visiting Cairns primarily for the bats in the city. That flying-foxes are a tourism attraction is actually being recognised by local residents and by creating local buy-in provides an opportunity for conflict resolution where flying-fox and human conflict exists.
15. **Comments:** Tourists who visit Cairns bats are from many countries, Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, interstate and locals. Feedback: Comments from visitors to Cairns camp show how important this camp is to tourism industry from both Australian and international visitors.
16. **Social Media:** Social media also plays an important role in getting conservation and tourism messages out to the public as can be seen in the conversation shown on the left. Merchandise and education can be profitable income for tourism operators or community groups. Refer slide. Social media posts can increase the reach to people who haven’t visited Australia yet and who are looking for new experiences with a difference. Social media complements word of mouth advertising without employing expensive marketing and advertising tools. Social media promotion is seen as more authentic because it comes from people who have had the bat tourism experience. Reviews such as on *Trip Adviser* are also important in promoting bat and other wildlife tourism.
17. **Visitor Quotes:** Cairns is an international destination for nature lovers. What do tourists in SEQ (who often visit for sea and fun) think about flying-foxes? Ronda Green, chair of Wildlife Tourism Australia and owner of *Araucaria EcoTours* has many quotes from her guests, including from those who visited the Canungra colony. Refer slide for quotes.
18. **Australasian Bat night and other events:** Bat Tourism can also take the form of events. It can make a difference for conservation and inspire visitors to act. Can education facilitate positive attitudinal change toward flying-foxes and assist in conflict resolution? Part of Maree Kerr’s surveys of research into understanding values and assessing education in promoting positive attitudinal change toward flying-foxes has shown that events including Adelaide’s Bat Ramble and Tamworth’s Bat Night are making a difference and have potential for normalising societal values toward flying-foxes, which may assist in conflict resolution. Participant knowledge about flying-foxes has increased, views about bats become more positive and importantly the information learned has created a greater understanding of how people and bats can co-exist. This can assist the local community to become a positive host community for bat tourism and conservation. Refer slide for preliminary stats and graphs.
19. **Inspiring visitors to act:** Bat tourism can inspire action for conservation. Wildlife tourism creates empathy, Once appreciated, understanding. Appreciation and understanding lead to Action under the Connect, Care, Act model. These are some of the activities, including citizen science projects, that visitors and guests can participate in after a bat tourism experience. Bat tourism can help conservation by

getting people involved. Save our spectacled flying-fox Bat Watch program. Tell us about a camp near you or where flying-foxes are feeding. Help us restore habitat. And if you can't care for a bat, you can sponsor a pup in care till it is released

20. ***Value adding with interpretation:*** Flyout Bat chats, Cairns- Value adding to an amazing experience and inspiring future action. This is something that can be carried out in the Scenic Rim. The Scenic Rim LGA can participate in programs such as volunteer guides at certain camp sites for either daytime or evening flyout: it can hold annual or seasonal Australasian Bat Night events for locals and visitors for both flying-foxes and microbats; it can run spotlighting walks including detecting for bats at regular intervals for locals and visitors as part of the annual event calendar; it can promote local tourism operators who feature bats in their itineraries. Interpretation adds to wildlife experience of the tourists and guests, making it more likely that visitors will act for conservation of bats, and also assists appreciation of bats among the local community encouraging buy-in for bat tourism from the local residents.