

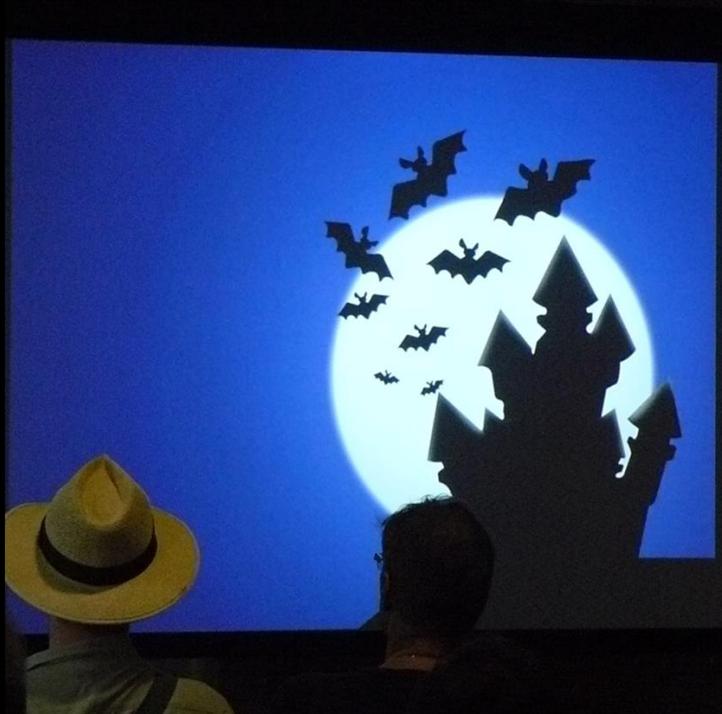


Combating the negative image of bats:
The role of wildlife tourism, events and
citizen science.

A case study of the Spectacled Flying-fox

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Perceptions of bats



Bats are feared and misunderstood in many societies.

Bats are seen as:

- Scary
- Evil creatures of the night
- Disease carrying
 - Rabies
 - Hendra
 - Covid-19
- Blood sucking vampires
- Smelly
- Noisy
- Orchard raiders

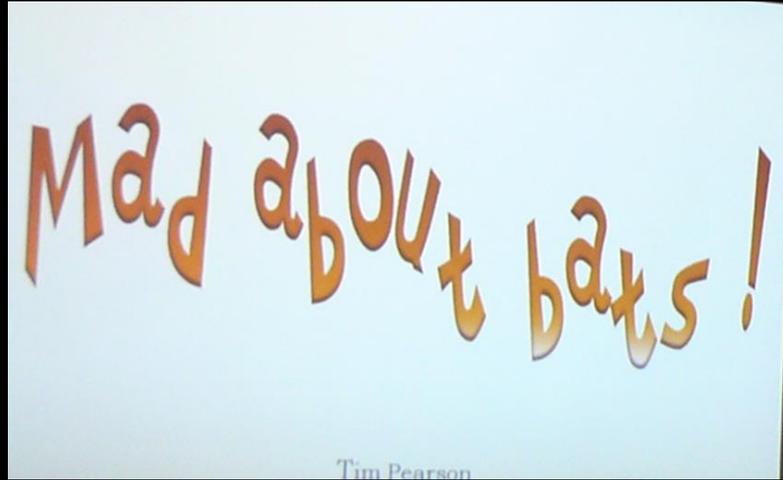
Myths, superstition, prejudice, ignorance, bad press, portrayal of bats in movies and literature, even government health warnings all reinforce negative views toward bats.

Yet the benefits from bats outweigh any negatives. Bats provide pollination, seed dispersal and pest control ecoservices.

The risk of transmission of disease can be managed.

No touch, No risk

Conserving bats



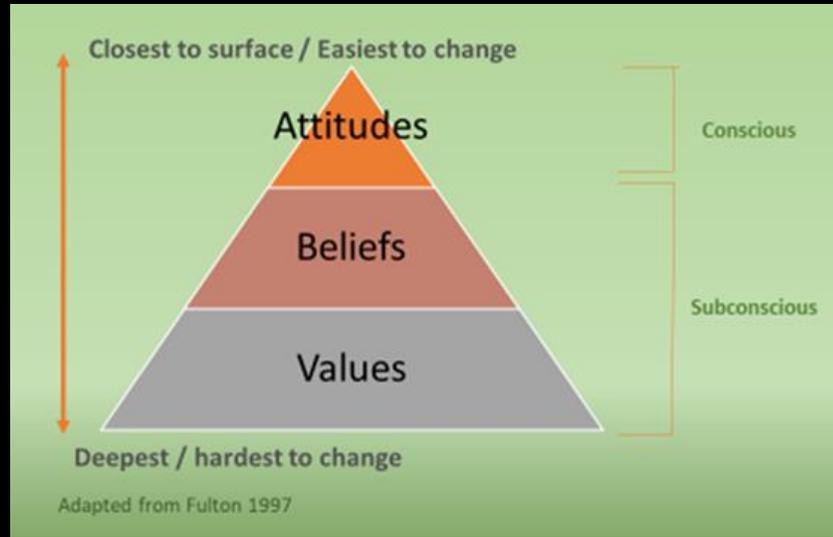
No amount of research will conserve bats if we don't have political and community will.

Personal wildlife experiences change attitudes.

Normalising attitudes toward bats as part of our life can create the community will and put pressure on governments.



Changing attitudes



Characteristic	Group	Likely effectiveness of education	Priority for education
Attitude towards flying-foxes	Positive	improve knowledge only	Low
	Ambivalent	Potential to change attitudes	High
	Negative	Limited	Medium
Potential for bat conservation influence	Decision makers- eg Government	Very important	High
	Influential – eg industry bodies, media	Important	High
	Directly impacted – eg orchardists and residents near camps	Important	High
	Not impacted – general public	Important to build support for bat conservation	Medium

Strategies to change attitudes include:

- Community engagement and education
- Events
- Citizen Science
- Voluntourism
- Wildlife Tourism

Community engagement can affect attitudes toward wildlife and assist in wildlife conflict resolution.

But education alone is not enough.

Research shows that prior attitudes and underlying belief systems and values affect effectiveness of education.

Breaking down barriers



Multiple interpretation strategies are needed.

- People listen to people like them
- People learn by doing
- Imagery and story can create empathy
- Messages need to be positively framed
- Meeting live animals makes a difference
- Showing economic value (eg bat tourism) can persuade others

Normalising the value of wildlife and bats to society is important.

People like to be like everyone else.

If most people accept bats, views from “bat haters” will not be legitimised.

Understand, appreciate, act

Bat Tourism around the world



Bat Tourism has been around since the 1800s.

Bat Tourism has become particularly popular among travellers since it was promoted by Bat Conservation International in the 1980s

Bats are popular as guests find the many types of bats fascinating and the amazing places they live to be wonderful tourist destinations.

Flying fox tourism



In the Philippines, local fisher people are being trained as guides to help develop a tourism industry which helps conserve the endangered flying foxes and brings income and employment to local communities.

Tonga's flying foxes are also a tourist attraction.

It is important that host communities benefit from bat tourism.

Bat Tourism in Australia



In Australia, we have a wonderful diversity of both mega and microbats, many of which are endemic.

Many tourists drive to destinations in Australia with backpackers and grey nomads making up the lion share of ground-based tourism.

Opportunity to create a unique wildlife tourism opportunity for both Australian and international tourists.

Bats are widely distributed throughout Australia, making them a delightful addition to a road trip that's already underway.

The Great Australian Bat Tourism Trail



An app for travellers and citizen scientists in Australia

A joint project by Australasian Bat Society and Wildlife Tourism Australia

Balancing visitor expectations with bat conservation



Coming to Android soon

ausbattrail@gmail.com

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 camps at daytime or watch the evening flyout. Guided wildlife tours featuring flying-foxes in the Scenic Rim include [Araucaria Ecotours](#).

National Events



<http://ausbats.org.au/australasian-bat-night>

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

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

- Purpose:** To raise awareness and promote appreciation of bats throughout Australasia
- **Community engagement** Local events engage with local communities
 - **Partnerships** Local governments, State & Commonwealth departments, Landcare, NRM, bat groups, environment, wildlife care & other community groups, field naturalists, scouts, outdoor education, artists, museums, zoos & parks, whole towns, schools & individuals
 - **Education** Learning from bat experts, Debunking myths, Participating in research & projects
 - **Fun** Family and kid friendly, Craft, Games, Enjoying bat picnics, Memorable flyouts

Bat Night Resources



People: Bat Speakers

ABS can provide bat speakers who can give general bat talks & walks or talk about latest research



Sample presentations

ABS can provide bat presentation templates and photos for bat night presenters



Bat Facts, Kids' activities, Bat Pack, and stickers

ABS has produced Bat Facts, stickers and links to kids' activities to help give accurate information and make Bat Nights fun



Engaging with people and having fun

Bat Nights can take many formats both small and large: simple talks and walks, bat box building and monitoring projects, flyout picnics, citizen science and bat festivals



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 ecological literate community.



Photo credits and acknowledgements: Helen Douglas (Halley Designs), Louise Saunders, Michael Pennay, Australasian Bat Society, Centennial Parklands, Lisa Coe, Tracy Sorensen

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

Partnering with

- LandCare groups
- Bat care groups
- Field Naturalists
- Local Government
- National Parks and zoos
- Museums and galleries
- ABS members
- Schools

Bat Nights formats:

- Bat walks
- Bat talks
- Meeting live bats
- Flying-fox Fly-out viewing
- Bat Film nights
- School bat fairs
- Bat parties
- Bat Box projects
- Bat Festivals
- Field trips
- Boat cruises
- Exhibitions



The Spectacled Flying-Fox and BatSoc



Bats and Trees Society of Cairns (BatSoc) was formed in 2017. It carries out:

- Community and school education and engagement
- Public events
- Annual Bat Festival
- Citizen science projects
- Supports Bat carers
- Advocacy and fundraising
- Consultation with governments
- Is a member of the Spectacled Flying-fox Recovery Team

We work with bat carers, conservation groups and governments and engage with the community to conserve the Spectacled flying-fox and enable people to live peacefully with all bats.

Bat Chats



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



Bat Chats held each school holiday weekend evening

Promoted by Cairns Council

Trained Volunteers interpret flying-fox behaviour before and during the evening flyout

Attracts up to 100+ people



The Spectacled Flying-fox Camp at the library grounds, Cairns CBD has always been popular with international and interstate tourists.

Providing interpretation with the BatChat program adds value to the experience.

Since the dispersal of the library camp, Bat chats is moving to a new home and engaging with QuestaGame to provide an interpretive Bat Trail on Cairns Esplanade.

Cairns Bat Festival



Annual Cairns Bat Festival

- Part of Australasian Bat night
- Major BatSoc community engagement event
- Supported by Cairns Regional Council
- Caters for all ages
- Local performers and guest speakers
- Local Venues supporting Cairns economy

2021 Cairns Bat festival

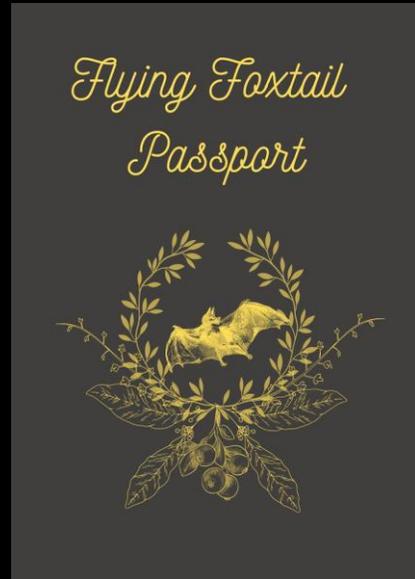
- Drummed in by local drumming school
- Blessing ceremony
- Welcome to country and talk on valuing flying-foxes
- Local musicians
- Microbat talk and walk
- Expert guest speaker
- Face painting and bat glitter tattoos and projected images
- Crawl through Bat Sculpture
- Bats on stilts
- Bat- themed food and drink



Bats at EcoFiesta



Flying foxtail trail



The foxtail trail

- inspires conversations about bats
- a sideways form of community engagement and education
- lightens the mood of the subject
- promotes the Bat Festival
- gets businesses to back bats and create a unique identity for Cairns

#Cocktails for conservation

Engaged 15 local businesses to feature a Flying Foxtail

Each business hands out “Bat Passports”. Patrons collect a stamp from each participating venue and can win a prize!

Ran over two weeks

Incorporated businesses along a walking path from our host Bat Night venue to the venue of Eco-fiesta that took place the following day. A few were off the path, imitating the feeding behaviours of Flying Foxes!

What in the heck does a bat have to do with cocktails? Bats

- pollinate sugar cane and tequila
- disperse seeds of fruits
- pollinate fruit orchards
- control insect populations which keep grain and other ingredient crops healthy

Your drink would not be possible without bats!!



The Virtual Bat - Augmented reality

Experience up close and personal

Upside down the virtual way



Save Our Spectacled Flying-Fox Watch project



In November 2018, 23,000 spectacled flying-foxes (around $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Australian population) died in one heat wave. We want to ensure this does not happen again.

The project aims to:

- Engage the community to record sightings of flying-foxes
- Collect data on flying-fox roosting and foraging ecology from field researchers and land managers
- Fill in information gaps on ecology and movements
- Identify critical roosting & foraging habitat
- Protect vital maternity camps through habitat restoration to mitigate impacts from future heatwaves
- Inform conservation actions to guide recovery

This project is supported through a Qld Government Community Sustainability Grant, Protecting Queensland's Threatened Species.

Data is collected through:

- Survey Monkey
- EpiCollect
- iNaturalist
- QuestaGame
- Official and informal records from ecologists, naturalists, other researchers, wildlife carers and land managers.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2C7BMN8>

Spectacled Flying-Fox Recovery Team

National recovery plan for the
spectacled flying fox
Pteropus conspicillatus



SFF uplisted to endangered 2019

No changes to legislation or
management to conserve it

2010 Recovery Plan has expired

Actions never implemented

No measurable objectives

SFF not a priority for a new plan

Recovery Team created late 2020

Objective to develop a new
Recovery Plan and implement
conservation actions to recover
the species

The team comprises ecologists,
social scientists, environmental
lawyers, animal welfare experts,
bat carers, community and
conservation groups, traditional
owners and government
representatives.

So far, the new team has
nominated the SFF to critically
endangered, and is drafting a
new recovery plan. The
Conservation Advice has been
updated to include heat stress as
an existing threat.

Community engagement has
been recognised as vital to the
recovery.



See the
world from
my view