

FLYING-FOXES IN RAYMOND TERRACE

FLYING-FOXES

The Grey Headed Flying-fox provides important ecological services, pollinating and spreading seed of native flora, including endangered plant species and communities. They are protected under NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, and listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and the New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

HISTORY IN RAYMOND TERRACE

Newbury Park has been home to a permanent, now Nationally Significant, Flying-fox camp since 2010.

In 2013, the Newbury Park colony grew and began to over-flow into neighbouring back yards. As a result, Port Stephens Council developed a Vegetation Management Plan for Newbury Park and obtained a licence under section 95(2) of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 to allow tree removal works to be completed.

The works created a buffer between the Flying-fox colony and the private properties surrounding Newbury Park. This buffer and increased understanding by neighbouring residents as a result

information sharing allowed the colony to exist in a level of harmony with nearby residents.

Council undertakes monthly monitoring of the flying-fox population in Raymond Terrace, namely in Newbury Park.

Council works closely with the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) as the lead agency on native animals to manage the situation in accordance with our approved Vegetation Management Plan and associated permits. Council also participates in a state wide Flying-fox Land Managers' Network coordinated by the OEH and collaborates with other Hunter region councils to develop strategic regional management approaches.

WHAT'S CHANGED?

Recently, the Flying-fox population at Newbury Park has expanded into Ross Wallbridge Reserve with odour and noise now impacting on surrounding businesses and residents in Alston Road. Odour has deterred users of the reserve and is noticeable as you drive through the area, with reports from the golf course and surrounds. Flying-foxes are venturing into backyards and impacting on residents through noise and droppings.

This change in behaviour is on the back of unseasonal conditions through NSW and south Queensland over the 2015/16 summer. This rare natural event has resulted in a flush of flowers on Spotted-gums, one of the Flying-fox's food sources, throughout the Hunter, causing significant

changes to Flying-fox seasonal migration patterns, most noticeably resulting in higher numbers in the Hunter Valley. Flying-fox experts anticipate that normal seasonal patterns may be returned to once unseasonal local flowering stops.

The combination of warmer conditions and unseasonal flowering has attracted Flying-foxes to Ross Wallbridge Reserve from Newbury Park and elsewhere. As of late April, monthly monitoring established that the local Raymond Terrace population has expanded from 10,000 to 20,000 with a related increase in resident and business enquiries. Council will closely monitor the situation, particularly in relation to potential changes from upcoming cooler conditions.

FLYING-FOXES IN PORT STEPHENS

In the Port Stephens Local Government Area there are also ephemerally populated camps called satellite camps located at:

- Fullerton Cove
- Meadowie
- Bobs Farm
- Wallaroo
- Salamander Bay
- Snapper Island

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HEALTH

The NSW Government states that human infections with viruses borne by Flying-foxes are very rare and the Australian Bat Lyssavirus is not spread through Flying-fox urine or droppings.

Health concerns raised regarding Flying-fox related disease such as Lyssavirus can be addressed by NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the state's lead agency on biosecurity.

The DPI estimate only 1% of the Flying-fox population carries Lyssavirus and NSW Health suggests all 3 cases of human contraction of Lyssavirus that have occurred in Australia have been in QLD, with all three transmitted via a bite.

Transmission of the virus from bats to humans can only occur through bites or scratches, or by being exposed to infected animals' saliva through the eyes, nose or mouth.



CURRENT RESPONSE IN AUTUMN 2016

OEH have released a revised Flying-fox Camp Management Policy in December 2015 that empowers land managers, primarily councils, to work with the community in the response to Flying-fox colonies. Port Stephens Council is reviewing its Newbury Park Vegetation Management Plan to conform to the new template as well as investigating measures to best manage the Flying-fox colony across the two parks.

The new plan will outline classes of, and the assessment of, available potential management options. It will also document application of the systematic decision making process developed by OEH to enable actions to be approved and implemented.

Council has been liaising with concerned community members, particularly residents of Alston Road to provide updated information and details on the cross governmental management approaches, as well as options for their own action and dispelling some common myths around Flying-foxes and human health.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To view Council's Vegetation Management Plan – Newbury Park Flying-fox Camp Raymond Terrace visit www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au

To view the OEH's Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2015 visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/flyingfoxcampol.htm

The OEH also provides more information on living in close proximity to a Flying-fox colony, visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/animals/flying-fox-measures.htm

The DPI has information available relating to health concerns around Flying-foxes, for more information visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/factsheets/pages/rabies-australian-bat-lyssavirus-infection.aspx

