



Bats and Trees Society of Cairns Inc
IA57198
PO Box 528 Kuranda Qld 4881

President: Maree Treadwell Kerr

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis – additional information to Submission 148

Bats and Trees Society of Cairns Inc thanks you for the opportunity to add to its submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis.

Since our submission, the Spectacled flying-fox has suffered from the first known instance of an extreme heat-stress event in November 2018, this event resulting in the loss of 23,000 flying-foxes, the second largest mortality for a heat stress event among Australian flying-foxes. This loss is estimated to be between 20 and 30% of the Australian population. Refer: [Humane Society International, 2018](#); [ABC News, 2018](#)). Our submission noted that [2018 Westcott et al](#) argued that the species could meet the criteria for listing as endangered if not critically endangered as a result of an estimated 75% population loss between November 2005 and November 2017. Advice from David Westcott (personal communication to the February 2019 meeting of the Cairns Regional Council's flying-fox Advisory committee) is that the estimated population is now 80-85% less than the November 2005 population.

Partly in response to this loss, the Spectacled flying-fox was uplisted from Vulnerable to Endangered (22 February 2019). However, the decision was based on CSIRO monitoring report of 2015 which indicated a decline of fifty percent between 2004 and 2015. The above shows clearly that even before the heat stress event, the population declined further between 2015 and 2017 despite the lack of cyclones which were the prime cause of declines. That the flying-fox population has not recovered is reason for concern and suggests that the population has now reached a level where other threats have become more important. This decline is clearly not sustainable, particularly now that it has suffered its first heat stress event and that heat waves are likely to increase in frequency.

The Spectacled Flying-fox is a very strong example of the inadequacy of current policies and legislation for curbing species' trajectories away from extinction. Its continuing and worrying decline highlights of threats such as loss of habitat and now climate change on Wet Tropics fauna. For further examples and recommendations, please refer to our full submission (Submission 148).

We request the Department of Environment and Energy to urgently enact improved protection of the Spectacled Flying-fox. Specifically, we ask that the Recovery Plan be urgently reviewed, updated and recommended actions implemented to reverse the population decline, that the *Referral guideline for*

management actions in Grey-headed and Spectacled Flying-fox camps ([Department of the Environment, 2015](#)) is revised as a matter of priority to reflect the recent uplisting, and strongly recommend that the Minister suspend all Spectacled Flying-fox dispersals until such revision and reviews are completed.

We thank the Department of the Environment and Energy for considering our suggestions and we look forward to the finalised review.

Maree Kerr

Secretary, Australasian Bat Society Inc.
Maree Headwell Kerr,
President
Bats and Trees Society of Cairns Inc.

About Bats and Trees Society of Cairns Inc
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Bats and Trees Society of Cairns Inc. is FNQ's newest not-for-profit incorporated bat group. Our aim is to engage the community and educate people in FNQ about the bats in this region and the vital roles they play, to work towards resolution of conflict between humans and bats to enable people to live with bats.

We do this by carrying out education in schools and the community, through representation of and assistance to local wildlife care groups who work with microbats and flying-foxes, and through cooperation with landcare and other tree-planting community groups to create and improve roosting and foraging habitat quality.