

Protocol for Release of Flying-foxes into Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve

Preamble

This protocol incorporates the principle of mirroring the development of wild flying-foxes for the release of hand-reared, orphaned ones. It is based on observations and experience of members of Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc (KBCS) and on the findings of research.

The release procedures in this protocol conform to the Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve Management Plan (1999) developed under the Voluntary Conservation Agreement 1991 between the NSW Minister for the Environment and Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council.

Section 7.8.2 of the Management Plan states that “the release of flying-foxes into the Reserve must be co-ordinated through the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society and must only be undertaken in accordance with licence conditions of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service”.

Rescue and hand-rearing of infant flying-foxes to weaning and flying stage is undertaken by wildlife care organisations (not currently by KBCS) so that the juveniles are ready for crèche at the date to be fixed in January.

Juvenile flying-foxes are banded by a qualified bander prior to release into the wild at Gordon and at other release sites in NSW under the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.

The release of hand-reared grey-headed flying-foxes into Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve has been carried out by KBCS since 1987. Although small numbers of banded flying-foxes have been found in other parts of the Sydney region following release, the fates of most hand-reared flying-foxes, their survival and behaviour after release remained unknown until the three year radio tracking research undertaken by M Augee and D. Ford.

Prior to this there were many times when young flying-foxes were reported roosting on neighbouring properties, being fed by neighbours and even entering houses. To avoid this dependency on humans the individually hand-reared flying-foxes were housed in groups (crèches) during January prior to transfer to the release enclosure close to the wild colony. The creching reduced the numbers of young flying-foxes visiting neighbouring properties. Following the implementation of recommendations from the three year radio-tracking study in 1994 - 97 the incidence of juvenile flying-foxes roosting on private property has been almost eliminated.

Refer to the attached paper:

**M.L Augee and Denise Ford (1999) Radio-tracking Studies of Grey-headed Flying-foxes, *Pteropus poliocephalus*, from the Gordon Colony, Sydney
Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales Vol 121 pp 61 - 70.**

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Rescue and hand-rearing of infant flying-foxes to weaning and flying stage is undertaken by wildlife care organisations so that the juveniles are ready for crèche at the date to be fixed each year in early January.

The release into the flying-fox colony is the final stage in the process of reducing human contact with hand reared orphan flying-foxes so that they have the best chance to integrate with the wild flying-foxes. This Protocol has been formulated to achieve this chance for their survival.

The radio-tracking studies of hand-reared grey-headed flying-foxes released at the Gordon colony have shown that successful integration of hand-reared flying-foxes with a wild colony depends on timing of release. Complete integration occurred when release was timed to coincide with independent foraging behaviour of wild juveniles. The findings demonstrated that the optimum time for release is around mid February, with only a short period of support feeding to encourage hand-reared flying-foxes to seek wild foods by flying out of the colony with the wild juveniles each evening.

1. The release of flying-foxes into Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve will be undertaken according to this protocol.
2. Unless changes to the release procedures have been agreed to in prior discussions between all parties involved in the release the release enclosure will be opened in early to mid-February. Support feeding will be gradually reduced over one month according to consumption levels, then reduced to every second, then every third day and terminated by mid March.
3. **To minimise the impact of the release on neighbouring residents** the release procedures will be undertaken with due care.
 - Timing of the release in mid February has been shown to significantly reduce the number of flying-foxes seeking human contact;
 - Minimising contact with humans during the crèche period and time in the release cage also significantly contributes to this result.
4. **The security of the release facility** will be fully considered in arranging the feeding of the flying-foxes during the release.
 - It is important that there is no publicity regarding the location of the release enclosure
 - People delivering food to the release site will be fully briefed to ensure that visitation to this site does not occur other than for the purpose of support feeding or monitoring of the release. Feeders will be personally asked not to refer to the exact location or to take there any person not involved in the release. This system has worked well since 1987.

- People entering the enclosure must be vaccinated for Australian Bat Lyssavirus.
- The immediate neighbours at No. 14 Taylor Street will be advised prior to the commencement of the release each year and be given contact details for reporting any unusual activity by people or flying-foxes.

5. **A Volunteer Manager and a Deputy Manager of the Release will be appointed each year** by the wildlife care groups intending to use the release facilities in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve. The Volunteer Manager may be one person or several people with responsibilities divided between them. She/he/they will be responsible for overseeing the entire release including

- transfer of flying-foxes from carers to crèche,
- collecting crèche fees from carers,
- transfer of flying-foxes to the release enclosure,
- banding,
- rosters of feeders,
- purchase of food and its preparation,
- instruction of feeders
- liaison with KBCS
- The manager of the release will contact a bat bander approved by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme in plenty of time to arrange for the purchase of bands and for an authorised bander to attend at Gordon on the banding day.
- report in writing at the end of the season to KBCS and the participating wildlife care groups on the number of flying-foxes rescued, number placed in release enclosure, their band numbers, date enclosure opened, date support feeding terminated, any unusual observations and any untoward incidents which are known to have occurred.

The Bander is responsible for forwarding band numbers and the records of sex, forearm measurements and weight of each flying-fox to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.

6. **Responsibilities of KBCS**

- KBCS will appoint a member of its committee to liaise with the Volunteer Manager of the Release each season. The Volunteer Manager of Release and their deputy will be invited to attend KBCS meetings during the season.
- KBCS will liaise with Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service regarding management of the Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve.
- KBCS will be the final arbiter on any management decisions during the final release period after the juvenile flying foxes are transferred to the release cage, and are the responsibility of both KBCS and the wildlife care group Volunteer Manager.
- KBCS will annually deliver to all neighbours of the Reserve a leaflet advising them of the impending release and providing contact names and telephone numbers of people to call for information or to report a flying-fox on their property.

- KBCS will report the number and nature of enquires from residents to the Volunteer Manager of Release for the end of season report.
- KBCS will incorporate the report on the release into the Annual Report on Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve which is supplied to Ku-ring-gai Council and the Sydney North Region of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- KBCS will maintain the release enclosure.
- KBCS manages the Habitat Restoration Project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve and will ensure that bush regeneration will not be undertaken in the vicinity of the release enclosure during the period of the release, that is, while flying-foxes are in the enclosure and during support feeding.

7. Release of injured adults or wild juveniles.

As soon as possible after recovery these are taken to the Reserve near the release enclosure, placed at the base of a rough-barked tree such as a turpentine *Syncarpia glomulifera* and allowed to climb the tree from which they fly to join the wild flying-foxes.

A record of adults and juveniles released will be kept by the Manager/s of the Release and by Kukundi Wildlife Shelter and this data contributed annually to KBCS for the Annual Report on the Reserve. Participating organisations will receive a copy of the Annual Report.

8. Further research

This protocol will be reviewed in the light of further research.



NSW
NATIONAL
PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE

ABN 30 841 387 271

Ms Nancy Pallin
Chairperson
Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc
PO Box 607
GORDON NSW 2072

Dear Ms Pallin,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and endorse your proposed Flying-fox Release Protocol for Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve.

The KBCS has reason to be proud of its records in preserving the Grey-headed Flying-fox colony at Gordon and in developing techniques for the rehabilitation of orphaned flying-foxes into that colony. I appreciate your desire to protect those achievements by documenting the strategies that have proven to be so successful. The Service acknowledges the important role played by the KBCS in flying-fox conservation and is happy to endorse the protocol document to ensure that the strategies documented therein continue to be used in the future at Gordon.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Wright
Director Policy and Science

24.5.01

Ku-ring-gai Council

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David Wilks

Contact:

In reply please quote:

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280103
24 July 2002

Nancy Pallin
PO BOX 607
GORDON NSW 2072

Dear Nancy

FLYING FOX RELEASE PROTOCOL

Apologies for not getting this letter to you earlier. Staff and Council assessed and accepted the protocol some time ago. This letter is to verify the verbal confirmation of the protocol you received in September 2001 and as reported in the minutes of the Bushland Advisory Committee at the time. Council has endorsed the Flying-fox Release Protocol.

If you would like any further information please feel free to contact myself or Council's Bushland Technical Officer, David Wilks.

Regards

Steven Head
DIRECTOR OPEN SPACE SERVICES

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