

# Flying Fox



Foundation for  
National Parks  
& Wildlife

Backyard Buddies is a free education program run by the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife. It gives you simple tips to transform your backyard into a safe and inviting habitat haven.

## Flying Fox - our only flying mammal and vital to the pollination of native trees.



Flying-foxes, also known as Bats, Fruit Bats or Megabats, mainly live in forests in coastal areas of northern and eastern Australia. Four species of Flying-fox live in Australia: the Grey-headed Flying-fox, the Little Red Flying-fox, the Black Flying-fox and the Spectacled Flying-fox.

Flying-foxes sleep during the day in 'camps' of up to tens of thousands of individuals. They hang upside down to sleep, but have to turn up the other way to go to the toilet.

Flying-foxes eat blossoms, nectar and pollen and fly long distances. They pollinate many different plant species and disperse thousands of seeds long distances. Flying-foxes are the only flying mammal. At night they can fly up to 30 km, pollinating many plant species and dispersing up to 60,000 seeds across the land as they do. Flying-foxes are a wonderful buddy to have around as they are great pollinators.

Almost all hardwood species need Flying foxes for pollination. They are the only known pollinators of some rainforest species and are also important to native plants.

Flying-foxes don't use sound to navigate. They use their eyesight and smell. They can also navigate based on the lights in our cities!

### You can look after Flying-foxes in your own backyard

Only use animal friendly netting to cover fruit trees or you may end up having to call a wildlife carer to rescue bats, birds or possums that get caught in it. It is a very stressful experience for animals caught in nets, and many don't survive.

Plant native species of shrubs and trees that produce nectar giving flowers, blossoms and native fruits. This will keep the animals away from your fruit trees. Ask your nursery which plant species are locally native. These plants will also attract birds, as well as Flying-foxes, looking for food.

If you have barbed wire in your garden, replace it with a more animal friendly alternative.

### What is a backyard buddy?

Backyard buddies are the native animals that share our built-up areas, our beaches, waterways, backyards and parks. The Flying Fox is a backyard buddy.

Backyard buddies are also the local people who value the living things around them and are willing to protect and encourage them by doing a few simple things in our environment.

You can be a backyard buddy. It's easy! All you have to do is understand what our buddies like and do not like and take some simple steps to help care for them.

### Flying Fox love:

- **Nectar & Pollen** – are the favourite food of Flying-foxes. They will also eat native fruits. They usually only eat cultivated fruits if their usual diet is in short supply.
- **Tall trees** - to roost in during the day. Many thousands of individual Flying-foxes can roost together in a stand of tall trees.
- **Travelling around** – they are largely nomadic and move on with the seasons.

### But they don't like:

- **Barbed wire** – which their wings can get entangled in. If a wildlife carer is called early enough, a Flying-fox can be rehabilitated from barbed wire fence injuries but sadly many do not survive.
- **Cocos Palms** – which can give yummy food, but which Flying-foxes can also get stuck in! Sometimes they need to be rescued from Cocos Palms, and the unripe fruit is not good for them.
- **Loose netting** – like the black throwover netting, is deadly to Flying-foxes and many other animals. Use only animal friendly netting if you want to protect your plants.

EXPLORE:

# Flying Fox

[www.backyardbuddies.org.au](http://www.backyardbuddies.org.au)  
[www.facebook.com/backyardbuddies](https://www.facebook.com/backyardbuddies)

## Be a buddy to the Flying Fox

### Try to:

- plant nectar-giving trees. Flying-foxes would much rather eat the blossoms of eucalypts, lillipillies, melaleucas, banksias, tea-trees and native fig trees than cultivated fruit.
- keep your cat indoors at night and train your dog not to bark at or chase bats.
- only use animal-safe netting if you want to protect fruit trees.
- call a wildlife carer if you see an injured or sick Flying-fox.

### Avoid:

- using barbed wire fences around your backyard. It can cause serious injuries to Flying-foxes and other animals.
- planting Cocos Palms at your place as Flying-fox feet can get wedged in the fronds.
- handling a Flying-fox as they could scratch you. They are harmless if you leave them alone.

### Don't be surprised if:

- you see many thousands of Flying-foxes hanging upside down in a 'camp', sleeping in trees such as eucalypts during the day.
- you see Flying-foxes for a few days or weeks but then don't see any for a while. They move on from area to area looking for food, and have done so for many thousands of years.

## Find out more about your own backyard buddies

### VISIT:

[www.backyardbuddies.org.au](http://www.backyardbuddies.org.au)

[www.facebook.com/backyardbuddies](https://www.facebook.com/backyardbuddies)



*For four to five weeks after giving birth the mother carries her furless, single young with her to feeding sites. Once the young are completely furred, they are left in "creches" and continue to be nursed until they are independent.*



Rob Sundew

*During the day, large colonies of flying foxes sleep, hanging upside down in trees.*



**Foundation for  
National Parks  
& Wildlife**

Contact us: 1800 898 626  
[fnpw@fnpw.org.au](mailto:fnpw@fnpw.org.au)  
GPO Box 2666 Sydney NSW 2001

[www.fnpw.org.au](http://www.fnpw.org.au)