

Grey-headed Flying Fox

Pteropus poliocephalus

What do they look like?

The Grey-headed Flying-fox is one of the largest bats in Australia with a wingspan of over 1 metre, with reddish coloured fur around their neck, a grey head and a brown body which is around 25 cm long. The weight of this flying fox can range from 600 grams to 1 kilogram.

Flying fox wings are made up of a two-layered almost transparent flap of skin stretched between the lightweight bones of the hindlimb, forelimb and tail.



Where do they live?



The Grey-headed Flying-fox is found along Australia's east coast from Rockhampton, Queensland in the north to Melbourne, Victoria in the south.

The Grey-headed Flying-fox like to 'camp-out' in trees, eucalypt forests, rainforests, sclerophyll vegetation usually near water or in mangroves. These 'camps' can be made up of thousands of individual flying foxes and often consist of joint camps with other bat species.

What do they eat?

At night, the Grey-headed Flying-fox searches for food and may travel 50 km to its feeding areas. They navigate by sight and smell. It eats fruit from a range of native and introduced species, particularly figs, and for this reason it is sometimes called a 'Fruit Bat'. It also feeds on nectar and pollen from native trees, especially gum trees. To eat the flying fox uses its strong teeth to crush the pollen, flowers and fruit, but it spits out fruit seeds.

Breeding and Lifecycle

Female Grey-headed flying foxes reach maturity at the age of 3 years and mate in April or May. Six months later they give birth to one live young in October or November and the young are carried by the mother for the first three weeks; clinging to her teat with their special curved milk teeth and gripping her fur with their strong



claws. As they grow larger and become too heavy to carry on feeding expeditions, they are left behind in special 'creches' in the maternity camp. After about three months the young are able to fly, and by about five to six months of age they begin to feed independently.

Did you know?

One of the reasons flying foxes hang upside down is that their leg muscles are not very strong, so they cannot support their body weight easily when standing upright.

Conservation threats

Although they appear in large groups, numbers of Grey-headed Flying Foxes are declining due to loss of feeding and roosting areas because of habitat clearing, commercial, agriculture and housing estates. These bats are important to healthy forest ecosystems because they pollinate and disperse the seeds of many important tree species and aid in forest regeneration.



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