

Grey Headed Flying Fox

Scientific Name:

Pteropus poliocephalus

Conservation Status in NSW:

Vulnerable

Photo: Vivien Jones



SPECIAL NOTE: The loss of natural food resources means the flying fox searches elsewhere for food, such as fruit crops.

Description:

The Grey Headed Flying Fox is a large flying fox with a wingspan of up to one metre and a head and body length of 230-288 mm. They have a reddish-yellow mantle encircling the neck and a grey or whitish grey head. Fluffy, dark brown fur extends to the ankle - unlike other flying foxes whose fur only reaches the knee.

Habitat:

The Grey Headed Flying Fox is found in the coastal belt from Rockhampton to Melbourne.

Their social structure is organised around roost sites, known as camps, consisting of hundreds of individuals. They will utilise most habitat types which provide food, particularly eucalyptus woodlands and forests, typically near water.

They feed on a variety of flowering and fruiting plants and are responsible for seed dispersal of many rainforest trees, such as native figs and palms. It also feeds extensively on the blossoms of eucalypts, angophoras, tea-trees and banksia and is an important pollinator of these species.

Threats:

The loss of habitat is the primary reason for the decline of Grey Headed Flying Foxes. The continuing loss of these natural food resources means that they must search elsewhere for food, including fruit crops, which then become a problem for cultivated fruit growers.

They are greatly depleted in numbers and the prediction is that they will continue to decrease by at least 20 per cent in the next three generations given the continuation of the current rate of habitat loss.

Other factors that impact on the species are shooting and electrocution from farmers, and disturbance and destruction of roosting sites from habitat modification.

Community Action:

Warringah residents can help protect all threatened species by supporting Council's conservation work and becoming actively involved in programs such as "Friends of the Bush" which aim to improve bushland and habitat and food source for species such as the Grey Headed Flying Fox.

Residents are encouraged to have a "bush friendly" garden using local native flora, which do not require the use of additional fertilisers or use of pesticides.

References: Strahan R. (editor). 1995
The Mammals of Australia. Reed Books.
Chatswood, NSW

The Australian Reptile Park:
www.reptilepark.com.au