



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
INTERNATIONAL**



– Bat Advocacy  –



**WWF** for a living planet®

Sydney, 23rd March 2010

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

***A coalition of organisations today voiced serious concerns about the proposal to evict a colony of flying-foxes from Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens.***

In 2003, noise harassment was used to evict a colony of grey-headed flying-foxes, the largest species of Australian fruit bat and a key pollinator and seed disperser of Australian native forest trees, from the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. For six months, the animals were chased across the city before being forced to a new site at Yarra Bend.

If Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett approves an application that is currently with his department, Sydney could see the same chaos as early as the beginning of May. The same techniques as were used in Melbourne will be used by the Botanic Gardens Trust to evict a colony of grey-headed flying-foxes, a federally listed threatened species, from the harbour side Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

*“The 2003 action in Melbourne is being cited by Botanic Gardens Trust as proof that dispersals can work” says Humane Society International’s Nicola Beynon “but the reality is that dispersals rely on nothing less than extended periods of sleep deprivation and harassment of animals until they are driven by fear to a location that may be far less suitable for them”.*

Bat Advocacy spokesman Nick Edards said that it is a real concern that the Trust has no control over where the bats will go. The Trust’s submission suggests that it is likely that the bats will join existing camps in the Sydney region despite the land managers at all but one of these camps already explicitly rejecting this as an option.

*“There are camps in the Sydney region, such as the one in Kareela, that are areas of ongoing conflict between the residents and the bats that are already roosting there” Mr Edards said.*

*“The Trust’s proposal, which indicates that it is likely that more bats may join the Kareela camp, has huge potential to exacerbate these problems. We are also concerned that, historically, dispersals result in bats staying close to the location from which they have been evicted which, in the case of Sydney, may mean that they attempt to roost in parks or gardens close to the Botanic Gardens”.*

WIRES CEO Stan Wood said wildlife care groups are also concerned about their ability to cope with an influx of injured, exhausted or disoriented bats coming into care as a result of the disturbance.

*"WIRES has a limited number of rescuers trained to rescue and care for bats," he said.*

*"This summer has been an intensely busy time as larger than normal numbers of flying-foxes have come into care for a variety of reasons. Our volunteers face heart-breaking cases of animal injuries every day. It appears that they are now expected to deal with injuries that could be a direct result of the Trust's deliberate actions".*

The grey-headed flying-fox is listed as vulnerable to extinction under both state and federal legislation. Recent studies reveal the species is being pushed closer to extinction with every death due to a combination of declined breeding success and increased mortality rates.

*"Any actions that may, even unwittingly, cause the death of individuals or impact the breeding success of the overall population will be detrimental to the species, and will impact its ability to recover from the serious population decline that we've seen over the last 20 years," says WWF spokesperson Mina Bassarova. "The proposed disturbance will start while the females are pregnant. Like any pregnant mammal, they are vulnerable to miscarriage when stressed".*