

## Grey-headed Flying-foxes sighted in Adelaide's eastern suburbs

Local residents have been surprised to see small colonies of Grey-headed Flying-foxes – sometimes referred to as fruit bats – in Adelaide's eastern suburbs during the past week.

Grey-headed Flying-foxes have undergone a substantial population decline over their traditional range along the eastern coast of Australia in the past 15 years, decreasing by about one-third. They are considered threatened nationally and are a protected species in South Australia.

During the last few months there has been a noticeable expansion of small Flying-fox colonies into western Victoria and the South East of South Australia, with these recent observations in the eastern suburbs indicating that this expansion now extends to Adelaide.

The South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is asking people to report sightings of the Flying-foxes.

"We'd like to find out more about the distribution, movements and food preferences of the species, so if people spot a Flying-fox, we ask them to contact our Adelaide Region Office on (08) 8336 0926," said Jason van Weenen from DEH.

"The species of Flying-fox we have visiting South Australia is the Grey-headed Flying-fox. They are quite large bats, with a body size and wingspan about that of a crow."

Mr van Weenen advised people not to handle Grey-headed Flying-foxes.

"If people find a sick or injured Grey-headed Flying-fox or one trapped in fruit-netting, they should not touch it, but instead call DEH for advice," he said.

"All sick or stressed wild animals can scratch or bite when handled and a very low percentage of Grey-headed Flying-foxes carry diseases including Australian Bat Lyssavirus. There's no need to be frightened, but as with all wildlife, it's important to avoid physical contact with them.

"In the unlikely event someone is bitten or scratched by a Grey-headed Flying-fox, or any other Australian bat species, they should immediately wash the wound thoroughly with warm soapy water for five minutes and then seek medical advice as soon as possible."

Interviews with Jason van Weenen from DEH, and Terry Reardon, a leading Australian bat authority from the South Australian Museum, are available on request.

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