

Batty about bats



◀ Pam with her spectacled flying fox colony at BatReach
Spectacled flying fox orphans



Photo: Julia Cooper

Pam Tully is a dedicated and passionate wildlife carer who runs BatReach, a local wildlife rescue centre. A qualified nurse from Bendigo in Victoria, Pam's life changed in 1990 when a local vet in Cairns gave her an orphan flying fox to hand rear. It started with one little bat that won her heart, now Pam cares for hundreds of flying foxes, microbats, possums, gliders, bandicoots, and musky-rat kangaroos.

The plight of flying foxes captured Pam's attention as bats are often unfairly associated with myths and superstitions. Spectacled flying foxes have undergone a decline in populations over recent years, mainly due to habitat loss. The paralysis tick, which is common in grassland around cattle, kills the adults so hundreds of orphans come into care each year. Living in closer proximity to humans has also bought new dangers such as electrocution on power lines, entanglement on barbed wire fences and being hit by cars.

For many years Pam ran a wildlife rescue hospital on the Atherton Tableland and searched the local flying fox camps for orphans. Now BatReach is based in

Kuranda and the visitor centre is open to the public to increase awareness and educate visitors and locals about our native wildlife. BatReach is a registered charity which cares for and rehabilitates injured and orphaned native wildlife. Pam often has to get up every three hours throughout the night to feed a tiny orphan that has just arrived!

Flying foxes

Spectacled flying foxes are a vulnerable species endemic to far north Queensland. They are a keystone species because they pollinate flowers and disperse native seeds flying over 50 kilometres a night when feeding, a vital service for the rainforest. Flying foxes are a type of megabat and are all vegetarians. They have excellent eyesight, similar to humans, which they use for navigation and finding food. At night they fly over the canopy foraging for nectar, pollen and native fruits like figs. Unlike microbats which are small and eat insects, flying foxes take short bat naps throughout the day and night whenever they feel like it.



Photo: Lana Lopatch

▲ Feathertail gliders



Photo: Lana Lopatch

▲ Sugar glider

Look for a camp

During the day flying foxes roost in a group, hanging upside down by their feet in the tops of trees. This is called a camp. They are social animals and you will hear them chattering away to each other. If you find a camp, approach slowly and quietly so they don't become frightened. Sit down and watch them for a while. It can be amusing watching youngsters exploring and learning to fly. The camps usually move around the Wet Tropics during the year to follow different flowering and fruiting seasons in the rainforest.

How can you help?

Visit BatReach and ask Pam what amazing orphans she has in care. You can meet the spectacled flying foxes in rehabilitation, learn all about them and even become a fan on Facebook. BatReach is located on the Jungle Walk in Kuranda and is open Tuesday to Friday and Sundays. Please phone first to confirm opening times: (07) 4093 8858.

Financial donations contribute towards funding the medications, food and enclosures for the animals in care.

Become a volunteer at BatReach (minimum three weeks) and get hands-on experience with native wildlife. To find out more visit: www.greenvolunteers.com/aus or contact BatReach directly on (07) 4093 8858.