

# Efficiency

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## Flying Foxes & Heat Stress

Mid Lachlan Landcare



### What a run of >40C days taught us about disaster preparedness & our local bat colony

#### The issue

For ten days, temperatures in Cowra peaked in the mid-40s (°C), causing significant stress at our local Flying Fox Camp. We entered this emergency with:

- no prior experience in managing heat-stress events,
- little to no behavioural data on our local colony, and
- no pre-existing plan outlining what role, if any, we would play in such an operation.

Our challenge was to **respond to the situation as it unfolded**. This involved keeping the public informed while supporting visiting and local volunteers, agencies, and professionals with our local knowledge, networks, and capacity.

#### The solution

- Organise ahead of time what, if any on-ground support your Landcare team can offer & how that's going to be managed & monitored.
- Establish a local, multi-agency team & establish who can/ will provide what goods/ services during an emergency
- Know your local colony & where any information gathered on it can be accessed.
- Know your local carers. How many, vaccination status, physical location and capacity to respond.
- Understand who is who ahead of time: volunteer organisations likely to respond, government partners, local businesses, media, community supporters/ advocates.
- Make time to de-brief. Incidents like this can be tough on both physical & mental health. Groups such as WildTalk are available for debriefs.
- Utilise social & traditional media to keep public engaged, empowered & safe.

#### The impact

The heat stress event has had a positive impact on both our Landcare team and community. While we were previously involved in activities raising awareness of the importance of our flying foxes - we'd hosted our first bat night in October of last year - we were overwhelmed at the level of interest & support this event generated. Our efforts in supporting & documenting the on-ground rescue contributed to us winning hearts and minds - an essential yet sometimes overlooked aspect of species protection.

#### Learnings

Landcare groups can play a valuable & rewarding role in emergency responses. It's up to each local group to decide how that looks. During this event we were called upon to provide goods and services outside of our capacity. It's likely these needs could have been met had we been working as part of a coordinated, multi-agency team. Circumstances did not transpire for that to be the case on this occasion. However, we are determined to explore that approach going forwards. Our aim being to work towards a co-ordinated multi-agency, community-centric emergency response plan includes agencies such as Local Land Services, National Parks, Local Council & other local volunteer networks.



#### Key facts

- 42C is a critical temperature for Flying Foxes.
- Communities value being well-briefed during emergency responses
- The local knowledge & volunteer capacity of Landcare is best leveraged within a coordinated multi-agency team



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