

Media Release:

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Tis the Season for Flying-foxes

Tis the season to be jolly, the season to get drenched in monsoonal downpours and the season for the black flying-fox (*Pteropus alecto*) and the little red flying-fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*) to roost in large colonies around the Katherine and Mataranka region.

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) Wildlife Management officers and Parks and Wildlife rangers have launched an awareness program about flying-foxes and living in harmony with these important native species.

NRETAS Wildlife Management senior manager Dr Anne Walters said brochures that contain information about the importance of flying-foxes to the natural environment and how to reduce flying-foxes roosting around homes have been distributed to householders around the Katherine and Mataranka regions this week.

“In addition to the brochures we have added more online content to the NRETAS website, including information about alternative plants and trees that are less likely to be colonised by flying-foxes,” Dr Walters said.

“Flying-foxes are nomadic and will roost close to a food source before moving on once food becomes scarce, and both species prefer to roost in dense shady vegetation that provides protection from predators and weather conditions.

“We encourage residents to prune or remove favoured roosting trees such as the large African mahoganies and tamarind trees and replace with recommended alternative species such as albizia, northern cypress pine and she-oaks.”

Dr Walters said the Parks and Wildlife Service in Katherine have initiated management practices to reduce the frequency of flying-foxes roosting in Katherine and to help the community learn to live with wildlife.

“Wildlife officers and rangers are monitoring the habitats and movement of little red flying-foxes, providing advice for landholders, overseeing management activities to reduce the stress on flying-foxes, and collecting flying-foxes during relocation and pruning,” Dr Walters said.

“It is important people are aware that flying-foxes are critical to our natural environment as they disperse seeds and pollinate many native plant species.

“As with other native wildlife in the Northern Territory, the little red flying-fox and the black flying-fox are protected under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, which means it is an offence for people to interfere with flying-foxes without a permit.”

For more information about flying-foxes and the management program in Katherine go to www.nt.gov.au/flyingfox or call Parks and Wildlife Service on 8973 8888.

Ends

**Media Note – for more information contact Dr Anne Walters on 8995 5007
Images – colony of flying-foxes and a little red flying-fox in flight (courtesy of Gary Tabor)**

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