

Wildlife Capricorn recently teamed up with Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) to host a community planting followed by an information session at dusk to celebrate the Ross Creek flying fox colony as it took off on its' nightly foraging flight.

The tree planting took place in the afternoon near Apex Park and is part of a long term project to stabilise the banks of Fig Tree Creek to help reduce the severity of floods. The planting was done by volunteers, including members of the recently formed GenYadaba Group, and supervised by officers from Livinstone Shire Council and FRCC. When they had completed the planting those involved joined the people gathered at Appleton Park for the flying fox presentation and evening take off.

The presentation was given by local authority Dr John McGrath who spoke in great depth about the bats and the problems they face through human activity. Among the topics John covered was the valuable role flying foxes play in the environment, this is because their feeding behaviour helps pollinate and disperse the seeds of a wide variety of native trees, some plants even relying on flying-foxes to pollinate their species.

Another subject John discussed in detail was the problem flying foxes faced through human activity and widespread misunderstandings about the animals themselves. Among the issues he addressed was the degree to which flying foxes are a health threat, pointing out that a greater awareness of the low level of risk would reduce public anxiety.

A group from Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release in Rockhampton gave us a chance to get up close to flying foxes when they arrived with several baby Black Flying Foxes, the babies were an instant hit and spent their evening being doted on by an endless succession of admirers. While listening to John and fussing over the baby flying foxes those attending enjoyed a sausage sizzle provided by FRCC and prepared by their team members, this was well received by all and contributed much to the warm camaraderie that had begun to pervade the evening.

As sunset approached John lead a walk to see and photograph the multitude of bats preparing for their evening foraging flight, a highlight of this was the large number of baby black bats present in the colony. The evening gave members of the public the opportunity to come very close to flying foxes in both their natural environment and to see and handle the young in care, if more members of the community experienced this it would go some way towards dispelling the negative and largely unfounded myths that surround these harmless and likeable fruit eating animals.



Dr. John McGrath emphasises a point during his animated and very informative talk about the Ross Creek bat colony.



One of the baby bats brought along by Wildlife Rescue Rockhampton, these were hugely popular among all present.





The planting team put in 50 local native plants supplied by the LSC Community Nursery and afterwards did a rubbish collection before joining the group gathering at Appleton Park.



Shelley McArdle from FRCC holding one of the babies while talking with with other participants in the event.



Andrew Dinwoodie from Wildlife Capricorn gives a vote of thanks to John McGrath and all who helped make the event a success.



Two of the many thousands of bats that also helped make the evening the success it was, the black bat on the left has a well grown baby, this will shortly be big enough to become independent.



This event is supported by Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. through funding from the Australian Government.