MANAGING THE GREY-HEADED FLYING-FOX AS A THREATENED SPECIES IN NSW

P. EBY AND D. LUNNEY (EDS)

A REVIEW BY ELEANOR WILLS

THE grey-headed flying fox *Pteropus poliocephalus* is managed simultaneously under two contrasting paradigms in New South Wales (NSW), as a threatened species and as a pest in orchards and at camps in some urban centres. Many authors have called attention to the lack of understanding of the species and the obstacle this may pose for conservation efforts. *Managing the grey-headed flying-fox as a threatened species in NSW* was produced as a result of a forum held on the 28th of July 2001 by the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. It provides a comprehensive and up-to-date review of management strategies for the species, in the context of recent legislative changes.

The decision by the Scientific Committee, convened under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, to list the grey-headed flying-fox as a ‘Vulnerable’ species has widespread implications. This book provides an assessment of these implications, from the perspective of researchers, farmers and policy makers. The introductory paper, by P. Eby and D. Lunney, provides a historical context for the debate and a useful summary of key aspects of flying fox biology. The following papers – presented by biologists, farmers and NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service) representatives, provide an in depth understanding of the socio-economic impact of flying foxes in orchard and an overview of past and current management strategies and their short comings. Other papers are presented about relevant areas of flying fox biology, namely reproductive biology (L. Martin and A.P. McIlwee), the role of flying foxes in the ecology of the recently described zoonotic diseases (H. Field) and community attitudes towards the species (various). The final papers make recommendations for areas of future research and identifies policy issues needing further discussion.

The inclusion of two plenary debates, focussing on ‘Fruit and flying foxes in the 21st century’ and ‘Camp management, research matters and community involvement integrating fruit and flying foxes in the 21st century’ provide an informal insight into the diverse views of the participants. These debates also highlight the increasingly open dialogue occurring between researchers, farmers and policy makers. The question and answer sessions at the conclusion of each paper, are also insightful, highlighting contrasts of opinion and add clarification to key points.

This book is a welcome addition to current literature and should prove invaluable for everyone involved in flying fox management. Researchers, students, farmers, policy makers and those involved with community education may find it especially useful. It is a highly readable book and an interesting and engaging overview of contemporary knowledge of the grey-headed flying-fox.


Eleanor Wills, Department of Biological Sciences, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia.
