

The National Flying-fox Monitoring Program

Report on the November 2019 survey

Background

The National Flying-Fox Monitoring Program (NFFMP) is a collaborative program that brings the community and local, state and the Commonwealth governments together to provide quarterly snapshots of the size and distribution of flying-fox populations in Australia. The data collected provides unique insights into the ecology and dynamics of flying-fox populations and represents an essential underpinning for their conservation and management.

Monitoring of flying-foxes is useful for a variety of reasons but is especially important because flying-foxes are so often in conflict with humans while at the same time being of conservation concern. Two mainland species, the grey-headed flying-fox (GHFF) and the spectacled flying-fox (SFF), are listed as threatened under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and legislation in some states. The NFFMP provides key data for decision making not just for flying-fox conservation but also to inform responses to public concerns about the impact of flying-foxes on industry, amenity and public health.

Please note that this report is based on data available at the time of writing. Due to unavoidable delays some data is not received and collated until after this report is prepared, so is included in the dataset but not this report.

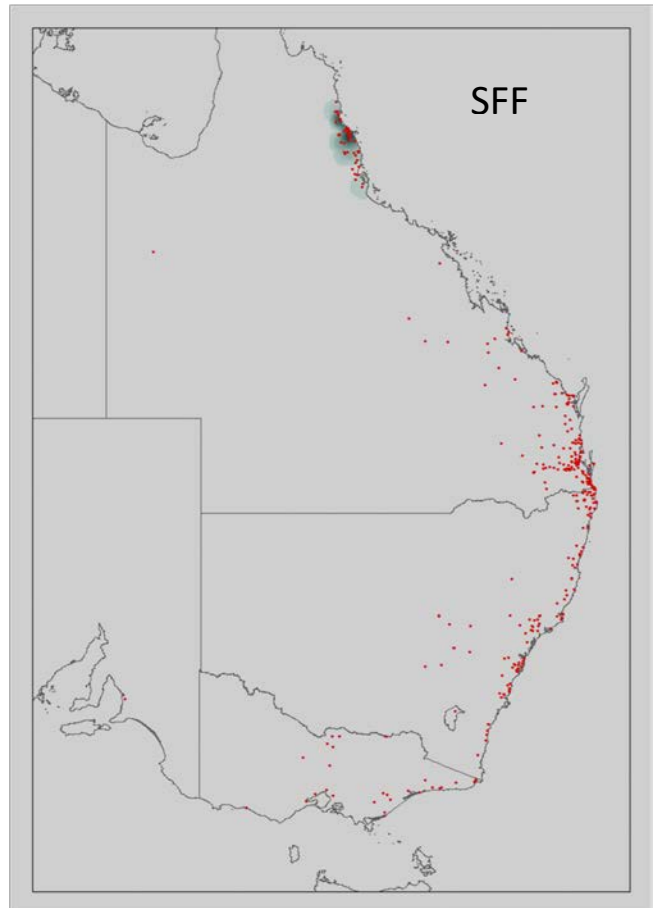
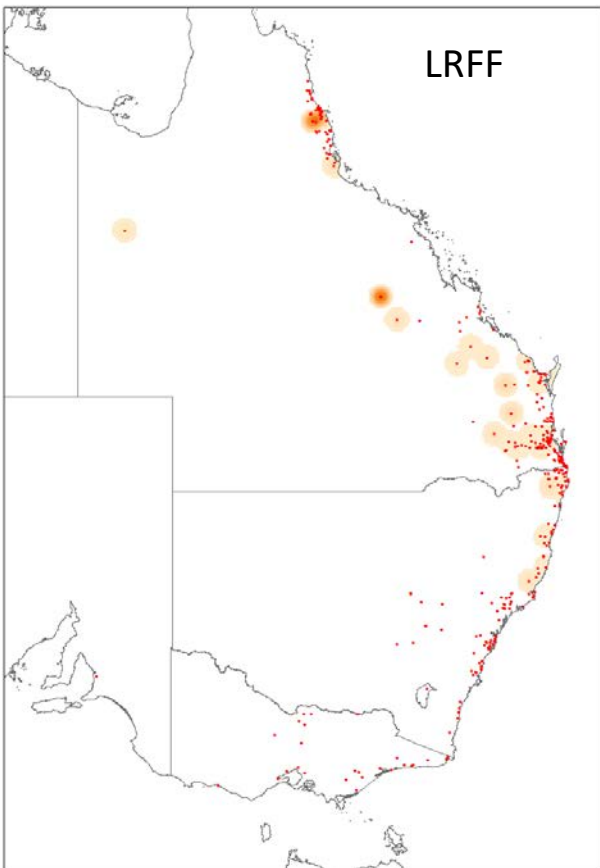
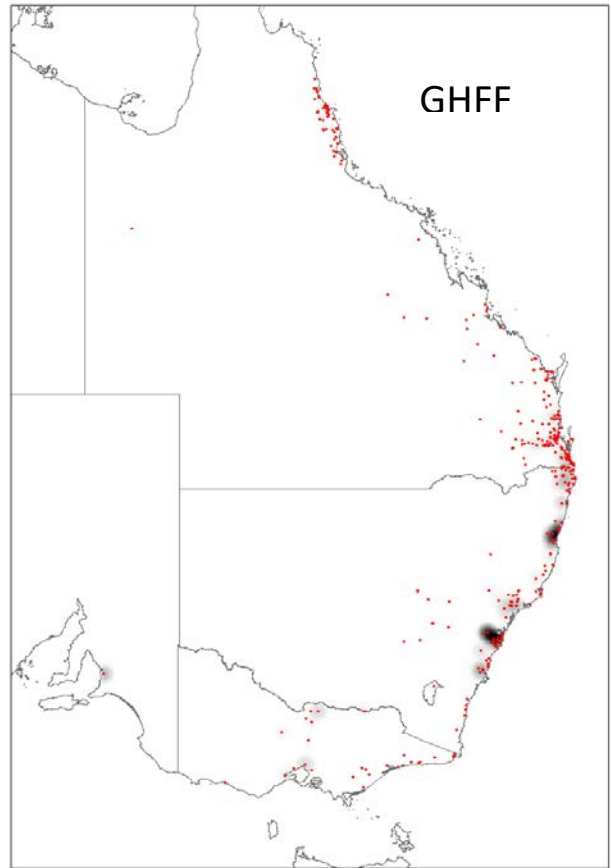
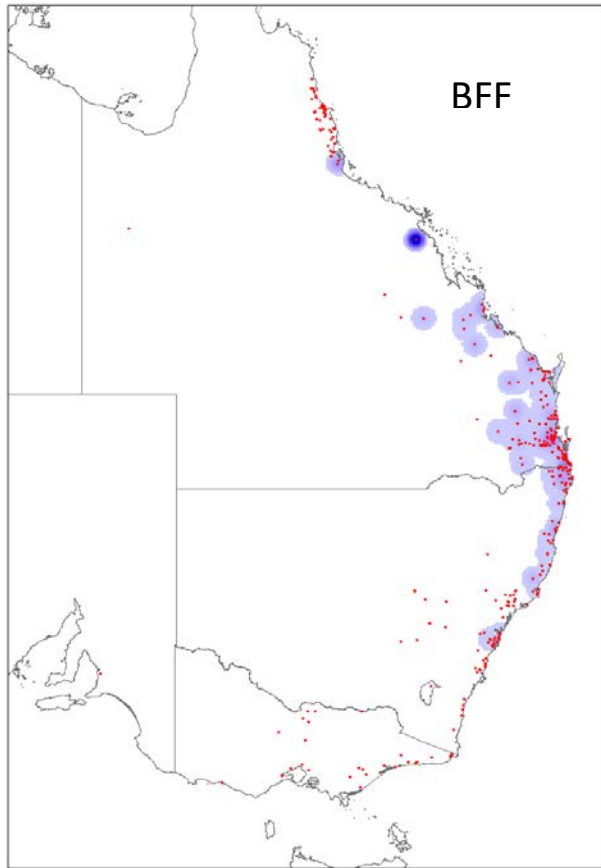
The November 2019 Survey Results - a Summary.

The November 2019 survey was the 29th quarterly count since the project's first survey in November 2012. There is still data from some data outstanding, however we present a snapshot of what's available at the time of writing. During this survey 358 camps were surveyed; 210 in Qld, 120 in NSW, 26 in Vic, and one each in the ACT & SA.

The survey was carried out against a background of extensive fires along a large part of the species range on the east coast. At time of writing it appears that no camps have been burnt, however the large smoke clouds appear to have reduced the numbers at most of the main camps. Based on the current data, the total number of GHFF counted in these camps was 467,000 animals, which is well below the usual numbers found in November. These were recorded from 157 active camps across the species' range. NSW hosted 80% of the GHFF population, Qld 9% and Vic only 6% of the population. There was a very large camp around the Sydney basin, with Windsor and Gordon both hosting more than 30,000 animals.

In the Wet Tropics there were 66,000 SFF recorded from 12 active camps. This is an increase in numbers since August, which we would expect. Large camps were at Port Douglas and Gordonvale

The NFFMP covers only a part of the ranges of the black flying-fox (BFF) and the little-red flying-fox (LRFF). This means that our estimates for BFF and LRFF are indicative only of the survey region and not of the size of the entire population of these two species. In this survey 170,000 BFF were recorded, with 82% of those being recorded in Qld. There were 365,000 LRFF recorded in this survey, the majority being in north Qld, with Clermont having 120,000 and Tolga 100,000. Wingham Brush in NSW recorded 8,000 LRFF, quite a far south for November.



The NFFMP

A map of the camps covered in the NFFMP surveys can be viewed at <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/16393>. Clicking on a camp icon will show a plot of species composition and numbers recorded at that camp during NFFMP surveys.

The aim of the program is to establish a reliable baseline estimate of the flying fox populations and over time to estimate trends. This will take a number of years since each quarterly count will be subject to various factors which will influence the results, making assessment of population size more difficult. A report reviewing the data from the first phase of the program can be viewed at the Australian Government Department of the Environment's website at <https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/status-and-trends-australias-epbc-listed-flying-foxes>. This analysis suggests that while the GHFF population appears to be at approximately 700,000 individuals, the population of the SFF has declined by as much as 50% over the last decade to approximately 100,000 individuals.

In order to achieve the best possible estimate it is important that surveys are performed using the methods correctly. We are continuing to conduct training sessions and the CSIRO urges any counters who have any questions or concerns about count methodology to contact David Westcott at david.westcott@csiro.au or Adam McKeown at adam.mckeown@csiro.au.

Thank you to all the counters who put in the hours to assist the program. Your effort is greatly appreciated.

If you would like to participate please contact:

New South Wales – Mike.Roache@environment.nsw.gov.au

Queensland – wildlife.management@des.qld.gov.au

If you know of additional camps or have questions about the counts please contact:

david.westcott@csiro.au or adam.mckeown@csiro.au

Additional information about the program can be found at:

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/flying-foxes-monitoring-program.html

The National Flying-fox Monitoring Program is a collaboration between the Australian Government, the South Australian, Victorian, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Queensland governments, CSIRO, local governments and volunteers in New South Wales and Queensland. This project is funded by the Commonwealth of Australia, the State of New South Wales, the State of Queensland and CSIRO.