

## **Prioritising choices in conservation: the unexpected journey**

**L.J. Scriven**

Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium, Australia

Corresponding author email: leonie.scriven@sa.gov.au

Keywords: conservation, grey-headed flying fox, living collections, prioritisation, tourism, stakeholders

Are conservation goals best met by managing single species? Prioritising between botanic garden living collection conservation, vulnerable fauna species protection and community expectations is challenging. Overarching this dilemma, can be the requirement to balance limited resources, multilayered governance, and different stakeholder outcomes. Such a challenge exists at Adelaide Botanic Garden and Botanic Park, South Australia.

In 2010, around 1,000 grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) extended their colony distribution range into Adelaide. This animal, a listed vulnerable species, is a keystone species indigenous to the eastern states of Australia. However, climate change and habitat destruction, has resulted in new permanent camps being established in southern Australia. The now 60,000 animals in Adelaide, have selected curated living collection trees in Botanic Park as their camp. The local public opinion of the need to conserve the species is mixed. Although a vulnerable species, it is not native to southern Australia and is now locally very abundant, presenting both a management, public perception and public relations challenge.

When flying foxes move into botanic gardens living collections, the overwhelming response is to intentionally, with approval, move the animals. In Adelaide, the prioritisation for conservation has been managed differently. A partnership of government, university, industry, event producers and volunteers have used a novel approach to conserve the flying-fox in a botanic garden, whilst responding to legislative, seasonal and potential public health and value perception differences.

Successfully managing a flying-fox heat stress event which could have resulted in a mass animal death event, whilst a 30,000 visitor-a-day event is occurring in the same public space is presented. This example demonstrates how a collaboration of multiple parties, the application of research for management purposes and the unravelling of governance can be effective for multiple stakeholder outcomes for unexpected urban conservation challenges.