

BATS ARE BENEFICIAL

Report on the 8th Australasian Bat Conference, 1998

- Dianne Vavryn and Mary McCabe

The 8th Australasian Bat Conference was held in Rockhampton from the 14 to 17 April, with post conference trips run over the two days following. The main organizers were David Gee, Mary McCabe and Dianne Vavryn, although many others gave a hand, whose help was invaluable. The Conference venue was at the Central Queensland University *Centre for Land and Water Resource Management*, with field trips into the local area. The one hundred and thirty-one delegates came from throughout Australia, Borneo, Canada, Malaysia, England and USA and included Research Scientists, Zoologists, Biologists, Academics, Professional and Environmental Consultants, Health Professionals, Students, Bat Carers, and those devoted to Conservation and Management.

The 47 Papers and 17 Posters presented covered a wide range of subjects including Echolocation, Flying-fox Ecology and Conservation, Flying-fox Management, Bats and Disease, Nutrition and Energetics, Foraging and Flight Behaviour, Distribution and Habitat Utilisation, Roosting Ecology, Habitat Restoration and Mine Rehabilitation.

The Wednesday field trips included Cammoo Caves, dinner at *The Caves Country Pub* and Ghost Bat viewing at Johansen's car park. A great time was had by all with many commenting that Flogged Horse Cave and the Ghost Bat viewing was the highlight. It was a great relief to John Toop and the conference organizers that ghost bats were very obliging and eight of these magnificent animals flew into the mist net John had set.

The Australasian Bat Society's Annual General Meeting held in Cathedral Cave at Olsen's Capricorn Caverns early Thursday evening, followed by the conference dinner held in the function area outside. Activities during the evening ranged from a slide show of Bat Cleft, competition for the best dressed in batty memorabilia and a fun quiz. Future conferences will now be the responsibility of the Australasian Bat Society, which will be held the week following Easter biannually. One of the highlights of the meeting was that of Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith being given Life Membership of the Society.

After the last paper mid afternoon on Friday, the conference concluded and many headed their separate ways. Field trips were offered for the remaining afternoon to Yeppoon, sight seeing on the way to see the Flying Fox Colony leave the mangroves at Ross Creek, and a group to Bat Cleft. A group of thirty-five people gathered for dinner at the Hogs Breath Cafe in Rockhampton and another group had dinner at The Caves Pub. Delegates were asked to fill out a survey form to summarize what worked well, what could be improved, and the

highlights, which will be forwarded to the next conference organizers.

POST CONFERENCE FIELD TRIPS

The Saturday saw a day trip to Mount Morgan to do the Mount Morgan Mine Tour, view the Clay Pits (man made caves), with the dinosaur footprints and *Miniopterus* bats, followed by an historical rail motor ride and a museum tour. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the steam train was unable to run.

On the Sunday, a trip through Johansen's Cave was organized, where some of us saw a Ghost Bat carrying a smaller bat in its mouth. It was believed to have been an Eastern Horse-shoe bat (*Rhinolophus megaphyllus*). This sighting occurred at 11.00 am and caused a great deal of excitement. Lunch was prepared by the Rockhampton Wildlife Carers group at the rest area in The Caves township.

After saying our goodbyes, a small group of us went back to Cammoo Caves where the owners generously allowed us back into Flogged Horse Cave for one of the group to collect some samples. We then visited the farm of Norm and Doreen Pershouse, who were affected by the mining and blockade of Mount Etna. On Sunday evening David Gee and family, Dianne Vavryn and Jeff Simmons congregated at Mary McCabe's home to discuss conference organizational matters and finances, followed by a late dinner and friendship.

The conference attendees were very happy with many aspects of the conference with positive remarks on the venue, food, papers and field trips. Many accolades were given to the conference organizers, and their many helpers, with remarks that the conference was a great success. David Gee finished up by saying that without the conference delegates and papers there would be no conference. We felt it was well worth the effort, having so many interested people coming together and the invaluable exchange of information that took place. We also thank our Sponsors, namely: Central Queensland University *Centre of Land and Water Resource Management*, Pacific Lime, Bacardi-Martini Pacific Pty. Ltd., Capelec, Titley Electronics, and the Australasian Bat Society, for their generosity.

We now look forward to the next Bat Conference the week following the Easter break in the year 2000. The next area being considered is the Hunter Valley, although no firm decision will be made until further inquiries are made. We wish the organizers well and look forward to attending.

