

may be able to tolerate a wider range of conditions compared with any other native or introduced fish currently recorded from the River Murray (Cadwallader and Backhouse 1983). It may be able to colonise some temporary wetland habitats from which other species are presently excluded due to periodic drying.

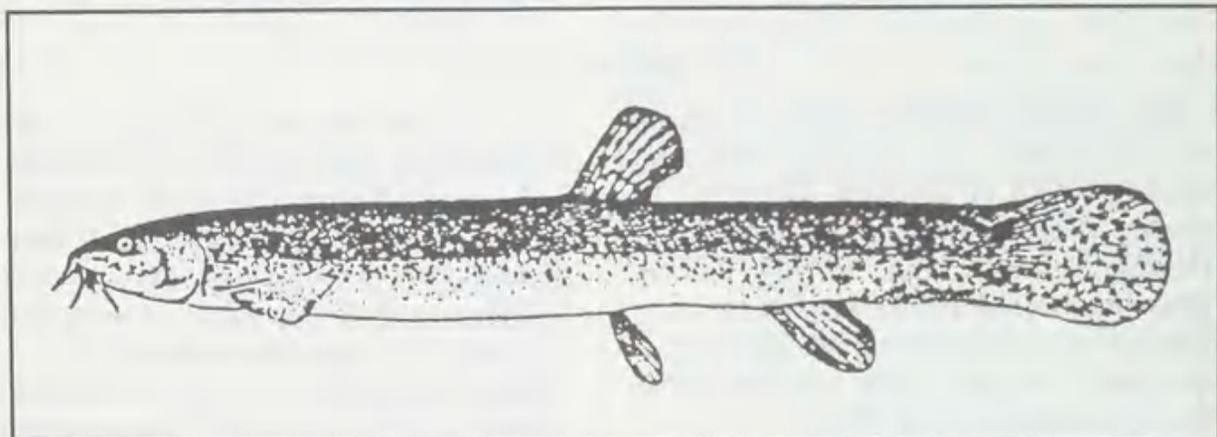
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Weather Loach. Drawing courtesy of Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Fisheries Branch.

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*From our Naturalist in Residence, Cecily Falkingham*

## Grey-headed Flying Fox

On Tuesday 11 January 1994, I observed a small group of Grey-headed Flying Foxes in my garden in Mitcham. They were feeding on the fruit of an Ornamental Cherry Plum *Prunus* sp. The time was 11 p.m.

I had visited the Botanic gardens in Melbourne on several occasions to view these beautiful animals so you can imagine my surprise, delight and excitement when I made the discovery.

During spring, summer and autumn I stroll around our garden with a small spotlight and miniature tape recorder. These nocturnal rambles have been carried out for many years and even the neighbours no longer worry when the sharp beam of the spotlight strays into their gardens late in the evenings.

Nocturnal insects, spiders and frogs so far being the main attractions with the nearby

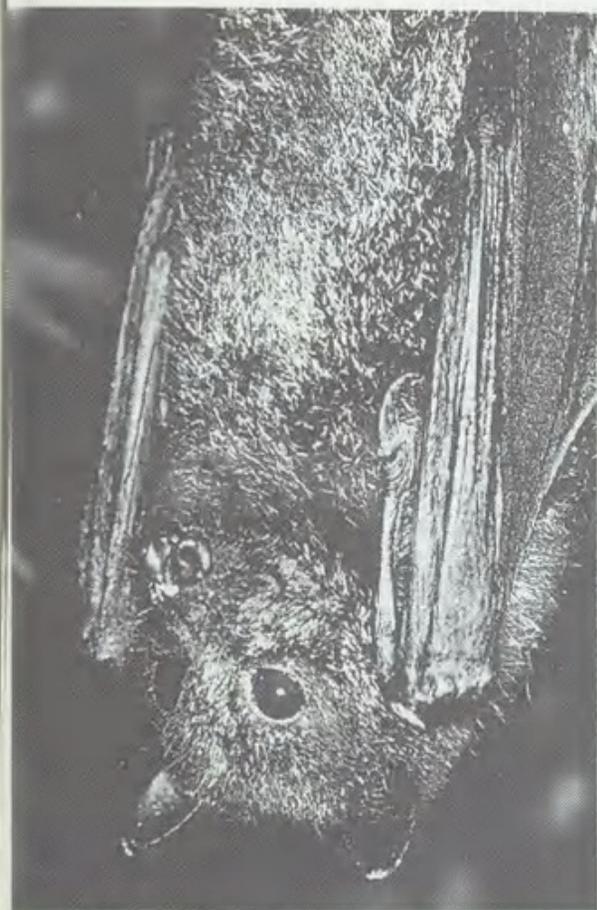
calls of Boobook Owls adding to the joy of my night walks.

Many people would be aware of the noise that Grey-headed Flying Foxes make whilst feeding not to mention the loud noise made by the large wings or flight membrane as they fly overhead.

I watched the bats each evening from approximately 11 p.m. until midnight or sometimes until 2 a.m. in the morning depending on how long I could tolerate being eaten alive by mosquitoes.

I found that they arrived within five minutes of their 11 pm 'rendez-vous' with the Cherry plums.

I soon discovered how good their eye-sight was when one evening I wore white sneakers (normally I wore dark clothing and shoes), they flew around and over, circling



Grey-headed Flying Fox. Photo by Lindy Lumsden.

my garden again and again and not until I hid myself did they settle down to their meal.

The group of seven animals divided their time between my garden and a garden nearby of over 3 ha. After gaining permission from the owners of the neighbours property I tried to observe what else they were feeding on.

I discovered that they had arrived one month ago on the larger property and had possibly been feeding on plums and loquat fruit, arriving at this property at 10.45 p.m. each evening.

By the time they had arrived at my garden all the fruit had been eaten at their first destination. Within three nights almost all the cherry plums were eaten in my garden.

Their food then consisted of nectar from *Eucalyptus globulus* sub species *bi-costata* and *E. cornuta*. Both of these Eucalypts growing on the neighbours property were heavy with flowers. Our last sighting of the bats was on 22 January 1994.

After making enquiries from Peter Menk-

horst from the Arthur Rylah Institute, it would seem to be the first sighting from Mitcham where I live. It also seems to be the first recorded sighting of the bats feeding on *Eucalyptus cornuta*.

I phoned two other Naturalists who live in Mitcham, both of whom had no records of previous sightings in our area.

Conclusions:

- that the bats first food preference was a variety of plums and loquat fruit, and only when these were all gone did they turn their attention to the flowering Eucalypts;
- their arrival in the two gardens was almost at the same time each evening. Possibly the bats left the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne at dusk, feeding at 'random' on fruits and nectar in other gardens on their way to Mitcham;
- that in spite of several *Eucalyptus* sp. flowering in the Mullum Mullum valley nearby, none produced the volume of flowers and the density of foliage protection as did the two Eucalypt food plants previously mentioned;
- that this 'appears' to be the first record of Grey-headed Flying Fox sighted in Mitcham. It does appear that they are extending their range from Melbourne in their search for food;
- that in spite of a dog on the larger property barking intermittently during feeding they were not 'put off their food'. The barking ceased when I asked the owners to kindly keep the dog inside at night, which they gladly complied with, being as delighted as I with their nocturnal visitors;
- that in spite of a den of foxes between the two properties and a lot of fox activity in Mitcham they managed to survive. In fact, feeding on my property was as low as 2 m when the plums up higher in the tree had been eaten.

We have a high population of cats around my house with two immediate neighbours owning four between them. It was infuriating one night to watch one of the cats stalking

the bats, needless to say I intervened. The bats, feeding quite noisily at the time, were unaware of the danger. Still, in spite of dogs, cats and foxes, the seven animals survived.

The Grey-headed Flying Fox seems to be extending its feeding locations further than previously recorded until my observations in Mitcham, which is a first, as far as we know. I would like a response from readers of *The Victorian Naturalist* as to their own

observations in the eastern suburbs and beyond if possible. I am particularly interested in the food preferences of the Flying Fox. Mr Peter Menkhorst would also appreciate any information in future on distribution etc. and he can be contacted at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 123 Brown St, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084.

**Cecily Falkingham**

27 Chippewa Ave, Mitcham, Victoria 3132

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## **Trees of Victoria and Adjoining Areas (Fully revised 5th Edition)**

by Leon Costermans

Publisher: *The Author*. 1994.

176 Pages, 7 pages colour photographs. RRP \$12.00.

There can be few Victorians interested in the outdoors and more particularly in learning about the surrounding bush who have not treasured and carried with them, a copy of 'little Costermans' 'Trees of Victoria: an Illustrated Field Guide'. For me this genuinely back pocket-sized book was indispensable when we first came to Australia and all eucalypts seemed to look disconcertingly alike. That was back in 1966, the year in which the original was published. Since then we alone must have accounted for several of the 120,000 copies which have been sold - we've worn them out, given them away, there's one in the house, one in the car etc.

This new revised edition, which brings in more of the areas adjoining Victoria (after all, plants know no political boundaries) has already, in only a few months, sold out its first printing. The highly successful and accessible format of the 1966 original has been largely retained with, for the eucalypts, detailed line drawings of leaves, bark and buds, plus an overall sketch of the form of the tree, plus a black and white photograph of the general bark type.

The language is simple, with a glossary for those terms that have been necessary, and like elsewhere in the book there is excellent

cross-referencing. Like the equally valuable 'big Costermans' - 'Trees and Shrubs of Southeastern Australia', this is a book not just to name plants, but one from which you genuinely learn, in that the plants featured are grouped according to their relationships, not by the botanically meaningless criterion of the alphabet!

In addition to the drawings which allow easy identification, there is now a section reflecting the growing interest of the human community in both ecological relationships and diversity of vegetation types. Simple line drawings of vegetation profiles are used in this section along with descriptions of soils and typical localities for each vegetation type. In my opinion, this sort of information is enormously important if we are to develop a truly caring and responsible attitude to our bushland. No longer is it just enough to name a plant and move on to the next specimen. It is to Leon's great credit that he has been able to encompass both approaches so clearly and pleasurably in such a small and inexpensive volume. We are all, beginners and those more advanced, in his debt as a result. Thank you Leon.

**Jane Calder**



Falkingham, Cecily. 1995. "Grey-headed flying fox." *The Victorian Naturalist* 112, 102–104.

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