

We The People

Program 81

Little Man - Clever Bats



Surely most rational people would agree that mankind is not looking after the planet. At every turn there is a new problem with pollution, waste and over population. When humans don't like something it's summarily destroyed as we don't provide creatures with the same rights we appoint ourselves and justice is denied the natural kingdom. It doesn't have to be this way and now we have a Napoleonic Emperor in Premier Newman who wants a revolution against bats and the environment.

The ordinary flying bat in Australia is actually divided into over 70 species with 19 in Queensland alone. In broad terms bats eat billions of insects and disseminate seeds in the forest and provide a vital pollination service. Our forests rely on this and in turn so do we, along with a myriad of complex organisms all operating in concert to provide our water, soil and air and the plant life we see, enjoy and consume. So along comes our new Premier, Campbell Newman, who makes the stunning proclamation that people are more important than bats. The stupidity of that comparison is self serving and self evident. It is a futile fundamental notion that we are even comparing the two. Mankind is not under terminal threat from little bats and it's only a rudimentary primitive campaign by the Premier to garner popular votes from gun happy dissenters and those who find fault with anything they don't like. It worries me that we may have a Premier with a little man Napoleonic syndrome.

Bats are beautiful animals and the only mammal that has mastered sustained flight. Flying requires a lot of energy, and as a result, bats need high energy foods. For flying-foxes, their natural diet is based on native fruits and nectar. Carers find that when given the choice, flying-foxes in captivity prefer their natural diet to exotic introduced fruits. Human activity has resulted in the destruction of many thousand square kilometres of native vegetation especially around urban areas and as a result we see more of them as they search for food.

A number of bat species do carry serious viruses, so do other animals, including cats. Only two people have ever died from Australian Bat Lyssa Virus and one of these refused potentially life-saving treatment. Four people have died from Hendra virus, but these were all contracted from horses, which it is believed were infected by bats. A new vaccine now protects horses and therefore humans and the actual risk posed by bats is almost nil. By contrast, humans are responsible for the deaths of millions of bats and millions of other humans and it seems to me that humans major in death and destruction.

Most of the conflicts between us and bats have been caused by our approach to urban and rural development, which has taken little or no account of the needs of native species. We can either ignore the situation and let these valuable animals continue their plunge to extinction or try to increase the amount of green space and wildlife corridors to accommodate bats and other native creatures. If we do not take action, many of these species will be lost, and we don't fully understand the impact that will have on the environment but it is unlikely to be good. There is also the issue of Emperor Newman and his Republican Guard allowing more logging of forests and changing the Vegetation Management Act to allow more clearing of forests. This will further reduce the bats food supply and drive them into cities and towns. Forests need bats for pollination; Humans need forests for oxygen; Bats need forests for food. It's elementary really. They have a vital role and have an intrinsic right to exist and I for one love to see them glide silently into my bushy Robina garden at dusk. Their navigation skills are extraordinary and marvellous to watch and they do me no harm.

So to our small minded reactive Emperor of Queensland, Napoleon Newman, we say you are out of touch and many of us deplore your revolution against bats that deserve better. We the people, want to set a good example in all things for our children and grand children and not be driven by ignorant fear or a sad little Napoleonic dictator.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley