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WHAT A WAY TO BEGIN THREATENED SPECIES DAY!

The NSW Wildlife Council, representing more than 4,500 wildlife rehabilitators in NSW, is outraged by the legislation introduced by the Queensland government to exempt flying-foxes from requirements for humane treatment under the Nature Conservation Act and to reinstate the damage mitigation control permits to shoot flying-foxes for crop protection.

From today, it will be legal in Queensland to shoot more than 10,500 flying-foxes per year, regardless of whether they are under threat of extinction. Both Spectacled Flying-foxes and Grey-headed Flying-foxes are listed as vulnerable under Threatened Species Listing! One might expect this sort of thing in Third World countries, but in Australia in 2012?

Since shooting takes place at night, compliance will be impossible to monitor; animals will doubtless be shot while in flight and quotas will easily be exceeded.

“Shooting of flying-foxes was halted in 2008 because of its inherent cruelty,” says NWC Chair, Audrey Koosmen. “Downed animals are difficult to find, which means they can suffer for hours or days before dying. A clean head shot is a virtual impossibility at night on such a tiny target. Animals killed often have babies back in camp which are condemned to a slow death from dehydration and starvation. It is of concern to us because flying-foxes do not recognise state borders and those to be killed in Queensland also forage in NSW”.

Although “reasonable attempts must be made to locate dead flying-foxes” and to deal with those wounded or orphaned, Northern Rivers Wildlife Carer Representative Ilona Roberts believes that “it is unlikely that much effort would be made until daylight, meaning that the animals not killed would have been suffering for hours. It is also unlikely that shooters will call in wildlife carers to rescue or assist wounded animals which they want dead. Worse still; shooting them won’t stop others coming to seek food. These unfortunate animals are entering a period of untold suffering”.

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