

# Bite from bat turns man off flying virus carriers

By SARAH CRAWFORD

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FIVE days of fever and the fear he may have caught the rabies-like lyssavirus was enough to turn Jimmy Corrigan off bats for life.

Four months ago the nature-lover went to touch a bat at Cape Hillsborough when he was bitten by the creature.

"I was in a cave at Cape Hillsborough and I went to grab it and it bit me on the finger," he said.

Mr Corrigan thought nothing of the bite on his left index finger until he got sick.

"I was feverish and stiff, I had a few cuts and they got infected."

After five days of feeling crook Mr Corrigan thought he should see a doctor.

"They took it pretty seriously, I was a little surprised," he said.

Mr Corrigan was started immediately on a series of injections to prevent lyssavirus which is endemic amongst flying fox populations across Australia.

"The bite wasn't bad, but the needles were, I don't really like needles," he said.

In the last week seven people have been bitten by bats in the Mackay region.

Tropical Population Health Unit public health physician Dr Jeffrey Hanna said medical staff usually saw the same number of bat bites over a three-month period.

People who have been bitten by a bat should seek medical advice im-

## Studying flying foxes

THE Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service wants the public to help them monitor colonies of flying-foxes in the Mackay Region.

Wildlife ranger Ross Monash said the QPWS needed to gain a clearer understanding of the flying fox population so they can better manage the species.

Currently flying foxes are being monitored statewide to assess the distribution, abundance and movement of the four most common species; the little red, black, grey-headed and spectacled flying foxes.

In Mackay, little reds and blacks are the most common, Mr Monash said.

The study will help the QPWS understand how flying foxes use their daytime roosting sites.

Colony sites can be reported by calling 4944 7832, or in person at the QPWS Mackay district office at 30 Tennyson Street, Mackay.

mediately. If they have not previously been vaccinated they will receive a course of injections.

Even if you have been vaccinated recently you should seek medical help.



**CAREFUL:** Only dedicated carers or professionals, like wildlife ranger Ross Monash, who have been vaccinated should handle bats.

Picture PETER HOLT. 110707/

# Hungry, cranky and in our backyards

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public health physician Dr Jeffrey Hanna said the seven people hurt by bats were scratched and bitten in various locations. This included in a yard, a farm, acreage and a resort. A Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) spokeswoman advised people not to touch bats.

"People should not go handling

flying foxes. They need to contact a wildlife carer if they find one injured," she said.

Mr Monash said there had been many dead birds reported in the region also. So far 47 rainbow bee-eaters have been found dead at the Gooseponds, Midge Point, Walkerston and Bakers Creek.

The birds were thin which suggested they were starving.

"Because they are (insect eaters) and the insect population is down, which is linked to the low pollination, the birds are suffering also," he said. Although the EPA is concerned by the deaths they hope more native flowers will bloom soon so the bat and bird populations will not continue to decline.

"We expect there to be a lot more native flowers soon," Mr Monash

said.

If people found injured bats they should call the EPA on 1300 130 to arrange for a carer to collect them. If you are scratched or bitten by a bat you should wash the wound carefully with soap and water about five minutes without scrubbing the wound. You should then seek medical advice immediately.

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