

# BREAKFAST WITH BATS

PHOTOGRAPHER: DOUG GIMESY

Over the last two years I've been working on a photo-documentary about Australia's vulnerable grey-headed flying foxes. I wanted to create a series of images that helped raise awareness about their importance to our forests (as pollinators and seed dispersers), of the challenges that they face, of what we can do to help them, and also highlight the incredible work of their rescuers and carers.

Whilst the photo series was always going to consist of 10-20 images presented together as a story, I also wanted to capture a few stand-alone images that might be impactful in their own right. Images that might stop people and get them to ask, "What's going on?" I believe that if I can get the viewer to do this, there is a much better chance they will actually read the caption, learn something, and if I'm really lucky, start to care and even do something to help.

The image here is of wildlife carers Julie and Graeme preparing an afternoon liquid meal for several recently rescued and orphaned grey-headed flying fox pups. Julie bottle-feeds them six times a day, moisturises their wings with baby lotion and keeps them stimulated with kids' toys. In the wild, the mother bats would lick them clean, but she draws the line at that.

The pups are very affectionate and a lot of the time they like to hang off someone warm and caring – really no different to what they would do in the wild if their mothers were still alive. This is something I wanted to capture. I wanted to show the bond and affection between the bats and the carers.

As a photojournalist, I just like to capture things as they happen and use as much ambient light as possible. Having spent a couple of days with Julie, I had a pretty good idea of her routine. So on this day and just before food preparation was about to begin, I set my camera on manual, exposing for the light coming through the window. I then set up a couple of umbrella flashes behind me for fill and as Julie and Graeme began their work, just started taking shots – exploring what the action looked like from different angles and using different focal lengths. In doing this, I really didn't expect the bat clinging on to Julie would actually look up and stare straight down the barrel, but when that happened, I was pretty sure I got the shot I wanted. A shot that might stop people and get them to ask, "What's going on?" ☺

**NIKON D750, NIKON 16-35 F/4 LENS. 1/320S @ F6.3, ISO 400. TWO OFF-CAMERA FLASHES FIRED THROUGH UMBRELLAS.**

