

## **“Chubb, where did this bat come from?!” by Michelle Chubb**

The 30<sup>th</sup> December started uneventfully enough with Joe beginning the morning with our usual routine of feeding our large menagerie of reptiles. I was interrupted from my chore of tending to my Flying Foxes inside the house by Joe’s yells of “Chubb! Where did this bat come from?” I rushed outside to see what all the excitement was about, and to my surprise in one of our lizard cages, low and behold, there was a Black Flying Fox peacefully hanging on one end of the branch with the central Bearded Dragons cowering in shock on the other end.

My first priority was to remove the Flying Fox from the lizard cage; no mean feat within itself as there was a small gap of a couple of inches in which the Flying fox must have somehow managed to squeeze himself through in order to gain access to the tank. Lifting the glass lid from the tank and towel in hand I prepared to remove the rogue Flying fox from his makeshift home. No sooner had the lid of the tank been lifted when he gently climbed onto the towel and before I could blink he had snuggled up to my chest. As this Flying Fox was obviously hand raised, I thought that perhaps one of my charges had escaped from the Flying Fox crèche that I have on my property. I placed the escapee into a temporary cage while I did a head count on the other flying foxes. To my relief I discovered that all of my bats were accounted for thus raising the question “where *did* this tame flying fox come from?”

Unfortunately for our unexpected guest the lizard tanks contain a large quantity of red sand for the lizards comfort. Much of this red sand had firmly attached itself to the poor boy’s wings, to his horror, his new mother – me – was forced to use a spray bottle of water on him to remove the sand from his body. This exercise was repeated several times a day for the next two days before his wings were finally clean. This experience didn’t stop him from devouring the copious amounts of food which I supplied to him. He remained as cuddly as he was when he first arrived; confirming my suspicions that this was without a doubt a hand reared Flying Fox. This juvenile animal spent the next three days in isolation while being caught up on the food and drink that he had obviously been unable to find.

Once I was confident that he was healthy it was time for him to be correctly trained by placing him in crèche with other juvenile flying Foxes. And my permanent adult Flying Foxes who are there to teach them how to be a bat – not a human in a bat suit. This practice ensures that our hand reared Flying Foxes have the best possible chance of a successful release and survival in the wild.

The moral of the story is ‘incorrect release of hand raised Flying Foxes could lead to disaster for the animal that you have so lovingly nurtured’. This little Flying Fox was lucky that he managed to find his way to a safe place.