

Primary entry #15: Anna Bay Public School



# ANNA BAY BREEZE



Bats flying over the skies of Port Stephens.

Picture: Kiahny Cooper

## Flying foxes fills sky with confusion

By **LILY STEWART, KIAHNY COOPER and AMELIE CONNELL**

PORT Stephens residents who take the time to look up into the early evening sky could be excused for believing they have been invaded by bats. But in actual fact, these animals are a protected species.

Les Seddon, the natural resource co-ordinator from Port Stephens Council, said that bats, also known as grey-headed flying foxes, are a vulnerable species.

"They only produce one offspring each year, and not all of them survive for long," Mr Seddon said.

The bats are only around for a few months of the year, as the majority of them will fly north for the winter. They will return to breed during the summer months.

The Council's environmental officer Jacqui Ashby said that there was a misconception in the community that bats were a nuisance. "These bats are actually a vital part of our environment because they pollinate plants and form an integral part of the food chain," Ms Ashby said.

Another misconception is that bats carry and spread disease among themselves and other species, including humans. Mr Seddon said that only a very small percentage of bats actually carry disease that can affect humans, and even then they would need to come in direct contact with them.

By **AMY BOURQUIN and SHANNAN PORT-ROSE**

AS a result of a drowning in the early 1990s, an Anna Bay couple, Shirley and the late Peter Broadfoot, founded the original Birubi Beach Surf Life Saving Club (BSLSC), which officially opened in 1998.

Since then, the surf club, which started as a tin shed, has undergone a number of facelifts, but nothing as exciting and major as the new club that opened 12 months ago.

Not only does the building serve as the new base for the club, but it also represents a true reconciliation between the local Aboriginal people, the Worimi, and non-Aboriginal people in the Port Stephens area, said Neville Lilley, a board member of the Worimi LALC.

The \$4.2 million surf club was designed and built through a federal government grant in conjunction with the Worimi Land Council and Port Stephens Council.

Since opening in December 2013, club members along with the public have enjoyed the new facilities, which include a patrol tower, training, meeting and store rooms, toilets and the very popular Crest café.

Rob Duff, president of the BSLSC, said that while having the



The Birubi Beach Surf Life Saving Club overlooking Birubi Beach and the sand dunes.

Pictured is (back row) Philipp Bourquin, Lorraine Lilley and Neville Lilley, with (front row) Amy Bourquin and Shannan Port-Rose.

Picture: Ellie Duffy

new club has not resulted directly in saving more lives, it has enabled them to prevent unnecessary situations.

"The new facilities have allowed us to increase our training programs. The increase in the number of visitors, both national and international, has put more focus on the magnificent Birubi beach and the adjoining sand dunes," Mr Duff said.

He said that the club had a new generation of surf life savers coming through the Nipper program. The number of Nippers from 2014 to 2015 increased from 100 to more than 180.

The BSLSC is fortunate to have many families involved in activities – both parents and children are on board.

The addition of a meeting room

has more than one purpose according to Philipp Bourquin, vice president of the BSLSC.

"The rooms are also used by the families and members of the club to socialise and as a result the sense of community has increased in the past 12 months," he said.

No doubt the Broadfoots would be proud of how far their club has come.



Roslyn Scoles, Jacinda Summers and Emjay Walters near the koalas' native habitat. Picture: Lily Stewart

## Destruction looms for koala homes

By **JACINDA SUMMERS and EMJAY WALTERS**

THE area around Port Stephens is home to many native animals, including koalas. It is also home to an increasing number of people.

The Anna Bay Community Action Group (ABCAG), in conjunction with the Hunter Koala Preservation Society, has been working to prevent a 104-lot subdivision at Fish-

ermans Bay from going ahead, even though the Urban Growth development has been approved by the state government.

The groups also want to protect other native animals, some of which are listed as vulnerable. They are against development in an area where so much destruction will be caused by vegetation and native animals.

Roslyn Scoles, president

of ABCAG, has been in consultation with Port Stephens Council and the developer over the past two years.

"Unfortunately, I think that time is running out to put a stop to the development," Ms Scoles said.

The developer believes the \$12.5 million project has the potential to increase area land value, as well as provide services needed for the increased population.

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