Vigilance and flight behaviour of four macropodid marsupials in response to human approach

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Wildlife tourists may not only enjoy the challenge of spotting kangaroos in their natural environment but they are also likely to try to approach such wildlife in order to improve their viewing experience. Satisfaction with the wildlife interaction may therefore depend on the degree to which wildlife subjects habituate to repeated human contact. We are investigating this process in far-western NSW through observation of four species of kangaroos *(Macropus rufus, M. robustus erubescens, M. giganteus, M. fuliginosus)* on Fowlers Gap Research Station.

Two trails through representative habitat of each species were walked daily for a six week period and the flight response to human approach was recorded in relation to species, age and sex class, the number of individuals within a group and the availability of cover. The single observer (MB) maintained uniform appearance and behaviour across this period. Generalisation of any habituation was then tested by increasing observer group size, and varying observer appearance and behaviour. The results provide Information about the disturbance that ambulatory tourists may have on these free-living kangaroos and the degree to which species habituate to repetitive contact.