

ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

November 2012

(Conducted 3rd December)

This month's sugar glider check was by far the most exciting we've had thus far! Terry and I met at the Jack Lyale Centre at 10am; Eva also came along to help with the day but met up with us across the creek later. Asha is currently in Borneo and couldn't make it. Eva was a great help!



We headed straight down to the pump shed, collected the ladder, threw on our gumboots and crossed Jackson's creek. We currently have two functional boxes for gliders across there and we plan on increasing that number.

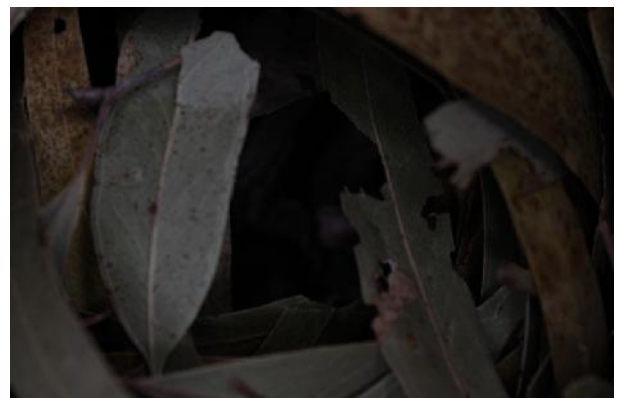
BW6 was checked first. Last month there were gliders inside, this month only nest material was found.

Next to be checked was BW5, lidless and usually home to a Brushtail possum. Unfortunately when we wandered over to it, it was laying on the ground having fallen off the tree.



BW5 with no back panel, lying in the grass.

Box 10 turned up a nice surprise with 2 gliders found inside. This is the first sighting of sugar gliders in this box since it was placed up almost 12 months ago! The first of many exciting finds for the day.



Box 10 - Hard to see, but a tiny pink nose poking out of the nest.

Back across the creek, we began checking the boxes along Main Flat. It was great to see that the majority of nesting boxes have nesting material in them.



MF9 – No one home!

The first sighting of gliders was in SG1. Last month this box was home to two juveniles, we were pleased to see them again this month. We also closed Bat Box C37.



SG1 - A family including juveniles

We then continued checking more boxes, finding lots of nesting material. Last month MF5 was recorded as having bees, as we could see a number of them hanging around the entrance of the box. This month there seemed to be no activity at all. So Eva volunteered to climb the ladder and check.

Once up there she said she could smell something quite potent and I knew straight away that there had to be a dead animal. On further inspection, we found a young dead (possibly a male) sugar glider in MF5.



MF5 – A dead juvenile Sugar Glider

We removed it to photograph and it was left buried in amongst the poas. I then cleaned out MF5, to get rid of the ants and old nesting material. This is our 3rd sighting of dead young in our nesting boxes. We are wondering what the possibilities of this may be?

- Is the young unfit or diseased?
- Are conditions unfavourable within the park eg: food source
- Or is it simply just one of those things?

After not such a nice event, we continued checking boxes, MF4 was completely empty, SG4 was riddled with ants and was turned upside down and cleaned out. Ants have been a problem in this box for quite some time.



SG4- cleaned out and left upside down to get rid of the ants.

The next box we checked was SG5, last month home to 6 adult sugar gliders. This month home to 14 sugar gliders!! Yes, 14! Terry was first to have a look in this box, he took a picture and climbed back down the ladder. When he showed us the photo I was ecstatic as I could see glimpse of a juvenile. I was straight up the ladder and after triple checking numbers I told Terry and Eva the final number, they were both shocked!

It keeps getting better.....



SG5- Can you count 14?

A final look in the box revealed that there were still 6 adults, same as last month. But an additional 8 juveniles were recorded. All juveniles in the box appeared to be at different stages of life. By far the most exciting sight was two tiny, furless sugar gliders with their eyes still closed.

At this stage of the day our total sugar glider number was at 19, equal to the amount of gliders observed last month (our highest so far). With 12 boxes left to check we couldn't imagine what else we were going to find.

As I did last month I will attach some pictures at the end of the report, as there are quite a few!



SG5 – Two tiny juveniles

We then checked MF3, empty last month. However this month there was one lonely male in there. We now have a total of 20 sugar gliders for the day. Our new record!



MF3- Male sugar glider

Once all the boxes along Main Flat had been checked we walked across to Red Gum Flat.

The first box to be checked was RG5 which was home to 4... Huntsmen! The box has been up for a few months now and has been completely empty every time we have checked it.

Next, box 12. There were four gliders inside, 3 adults and 1 juvenile. This is the first time we have recorded gliders inside this nesting box. We are very pleased to see them moving around and utilising boxes. However, once we came to box 11 which always has gliders inside, we found the lid on the ground. So we assume that the gliders that once called box 11 home have moved to the newer box 12.



Box12 – a cosy family!

Unfortunately also in box 12 we found another young dead sugar glider. Just the skeleton was left.



Skeleton in box 12

We continued along Red Gum Flat, RG8 was empty and will be removed next month for repairs. RG9 is still home to a Brushtail possum and if it ever evacuates the box will also be removed and repaired for gliders.

At this stage our total number of gliders was at 24 with 2 dead juveniles, so 26. We had 3 boxes left to

check. RG10 was full of nesting material as always and RG 12 was completely empty. RG11 last month gave us our first juvenile sighting. Excited once again to open the box up and see 1 little juvenile staring up at us along with 5 adults.



RG11

So, a fantastic ending to our November glider check. 30 Sugar gliders were recorded, that's including 12 juveniles!

It truly is amazing to see how far the Monitoring program has come, a year on and glider numbers have increased by more than expected and the program continues to grow and grow. Next month will mark 12 months of monitoring and we plan on sending out a report on the whole year's statistics.

Terry, Eva and I finished up around 3pm and plan to meet up for December's check in the first week of January.

We encourage anyone who would love to join us for the day to come along, we love having new volunteers. We will be conducting a December check on the 4th of January.

For now the team would like to thank everyone who has come along to volunteer and support us this year. We would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year.....

~Kara, Terry and Asha ~

Pictures of the Sugar Gliders in SG5.....







Sugar Gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) Organ Pipes National Park

Date -3/12/12

Main Flat- left side of track from Pump shed

| Box | Gliders | Comments | Action Required |
|-----|-----------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 2 | - | Nest Material | - |
| MF6 | - | Nest material | Needs new lid |
| 3 | - | Nest material | - |
| 5 | - | Nest material | - |
| SG1 | 3 | 1 adult and 2 juveniles | - |
| SG2 | - | Nest material | - |
| 6 | - | Nest material | - |
| SG3 | - | EMPTY | - |
| 8 | - | Empty | - |
| MF5 | - | 1 dead glider | - |
| SG5 | 14 | 6 adults 8 juveniles | - |
| SG4 | - | ANTS, cleaned out | Left upside down |
| MF4 | - | Empty | - |

Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

| Box | Gliders | Comments | Action Required |
|----------|----------|----------------------|-----------------|
| SG6 | - | Empty | - |
| MF3 | 1 | Male – nest material | - |
| 7 | - | Empty | - |
| 4 | - | Bees | - |
| MF9 | - | Some nest material | - |

Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

| Box | Gliders | Comments | Action Required |
|-----------|----------|---------------------|----------------------|
| BW6 | - | Nets material | - |
| BW2 | - | Bees | - |
| BW5 | - | Fallen off tree | Needs replacing |
| 10 | 2 | Fresh nest material | Screw to be replaced |

Red Gum Flat- Right side of track from Organ Pipes

| Box | Gliders | Comments | Action Required |
|------|---------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 11 | - | Lid fallen on ground | Needs to be replaced |
| 12 | 4 | 3 adults, 1 juvenile, 1 skeleton | - |
| RG5 | - | Empty, spiders | - |
| RG8 | - | Empty | Replace at some stage |
| RG9 | - | Brushtail | Replace at some stage |
| RG10 | - | Nesting material | - |
| RG11 | 6 | Including 1 juvenile | - |
| RG12 | - | Empty | - |

TOTAL GLIDERS = 30!!!

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = 30

NEXT MONTHS CHECK:

4TH JANUARY!



*The team taking time by Rosette Rock
(from left): Eva, Terry and Kara.*

