

# ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

## SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

**March/April 2013**

*(Conducted 13<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> April)*

Terry, Kara and I have decided that due to our success with the sugar glider nest box monitoring so far and our hopes to take the program further, we are changing our monthly routine slightly this year.

We are going to be checking and recording the contents of nest boxes every second month. Every other month, we will be incorporating additional plans, such as planting black wattles for during winter as a food source and possibly research of nest box usage. We are also using this time to repair, replace and put up new boxes. As we have more boxes than we did this time last year, we have found it hard to get everything done in one day.

So, that will explain why we have two dates at the top of the page! On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Terry, Kara, Rowan and I met early to discuss our ideas for the monitoring program this year (march check).



***Eva, Kara, Rowan and Asha***

We then headed down to Red Gum Flat to put up Box 11 which Terry had repaired. On Red Gum Flat, we met up with Eva. While putting up Box 11, Terry tried out the new safety harness. It was tricky, to say the least, so we are going to need a bit more practise!



***Terry trying out the harness whilst placing up box 11***

We then tried putting up a couple of new boxes which my sister, Abi, made to a slightly different design to what we have had before.

Unfortunately, they turned out to be too difficult to put up using just the ladder and screwdriver, so Terry has taken them home to be modified.

We are planning to put them up on Red Gum Flat at one of our next checks.

Our last experiment of the day was to try out the new camera donated to the park by the Minister for Environment at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Organ Pipes National Park.

We looked inside a few boxes and tried to compare the difference between what we could see with the camera, and what we could see looking in from the ladder. However, we met a bit of a barrier when we realized that the part of the camera which needs to be inserted into the box was too big to fit through the entry hole. We discussed the possibility of leaving boxes unlatched so that we can push the lid up with the pole, but we are worried that that would put the boxes at risk of invasion by possums, which kick the gliders out.

While we are disappointed that we won't be able to use this camera as much as we thought, Terry has found another camera online which looks like it will suit our needs really well. We are really looking forward to trying it out, so we'll let you know how it goes!

On our way back to the car, we stopped to remove a stick from SG3 from the previous month as it had ants. To our surprise, especially Rowan's, two sugar gliders came 'flying' out of the box.



***Rowan and his new friend***

On April 19<sup>th</sup> Kara and I checked the glider boxes as normal. Unfortunately, Terry couldn't make it and neither could any other volunteers, so it was just Kara and I carrying out the check.

As we checked along Main Flat, we found that there was still a rat living in MF6! If it is still there next month we will look at discouraging it, as we want the box to be available for gliders.



***MF6- Rat hiding in nest material***

We were happy to find gliders in SG1, SG3, and SG5. Sadly, we found a deceased juvenile in SG1. This could be due to the higher temperatures over summer, as gliders are sensitive to temperature changes in boxes. We are looking into repositioning our boxes to prevent further casualties next summer.



***SG1- 3 gliders all snuggled up***



Two of the gliders in SG5 had a clouded eye. However, gliders in all of the boxes on this day were very restless and active when disturbed so we were not able to identify which side one of the clouded eyes was on. The other glider we identified as having a clouded left eye.



**SG5- Sugar glider with clouded left eye**

A lot of boxes had to be propped open this month due to ant infestations. We think this increase in ant activity could be because there was some rain a few days before the check. We propped open the lids of these boxes and we're hoping that the ants will have left by the next check, so that gliders can use the boxes again.



**Box 5- propped open due to ants.**

Whilst looking into box 7, Robert Irvine and some land management students from RMIT joined us as we introduced them to our glider checks.

We spoke about our project and how far it has come; many were interested in its progress. We also invited them along to future checks and got about 15 new contacts to add to the mailing list. Hopefully we will gain some new, enthusiastic volunteers!

After checking the right hand side of the track, we finished the left side along Main Flat, MF9 had quite bit of fur and nest material, but no sign of deceased gliders



**SG4- LOTS of ants!**

We then moved on to Red Gum Flat to check nest boxes. We weren't able to check the boxes on Black Wattle Flat this time as we didn't have a vehicle or boots required to cross the creek.

Checking RG5 first, there was still no sign of gliders. Since placing this box up it has remained empty everytime apart from the odd invertebrate. We then continued onto Box 12, finding 4 gliders inside. One of the gliders in Box 12 seemed to be missing an eye; it also looked like a female. We're not sure if this was due to a scrape with a predator or another glider, or if it was a result of a disease of some sort.



**Box 12- Home to four gliders this month**

RG11 was also home to 3 gliders, they were a little agitated so we left them alone and moved on to the last box RG12, although it was full of nest material, there were no sugar gliders.



***RG11- One of three gliders peeping out***

Just after checking our last box, Kara spotted the drey of a Ringtail possum at head height right next to the path. It looked very cozy, although not too private!



***A ringtail possum in its drey***



***Box 12- Sugar glider with one eye missing***

Ants were also a problem in Red Gum Flat boxes. They had even taken over Box 11, which was only put up the week before. Continuing on, RG8 & 9 still had brushtail possums inside and RG10 was empty once again.



***Box 11- Propped open to deter ants***

On **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May** we are going to be putting up new boxes and possibly making tree frames for when we are ready to plant black wattles. All volunteers are welcome! We are meeting at the visitors' centre at 10am.

Thank you!

~ Asha, Kara and Terry~



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

Date - 19/04/13

### Main Flat- left side of track from Pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
2	-	Nest material	-
MF6	-	1 Rat, Nest material	Needs new lid
3	-	Nest material,	-
5	-	Ants, Nest material	-
SG1	<b>3</b>	1 juvenile, 1 deceased	-
SG2	-	Ants	Propped open
6	-	Empty, nest material	-
SG3	<b>1</b>	1 GLIDER	-
8	-	Empty	No lid, to be removed
MF5	-	Ants	Propped open
SG5	<b>4</b>	2 with clouded eyes ( 1 clouded left eye)	-
SG4	-	Ants	Propped open
MF4	-	Empty, nest material	-

### Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
<b>SG6</b>	-	Ants and spiders	Propped open
<b>MF3</b>	-	Some nest material	-
<b>7</b>	-	Empty	-
<b>4</b>	-	Bees	-
<b>MF9</b>	-	Fur, Nest Material	-

### Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
<b>BW6</b>	-	N/A	-
<b>BW2</b>	-	N/A	-
<b>BW5</b>	-	N/A	-
<b>10</b>	-	N/A	-

## Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
11	-	Ants (only been up 1 month)	-
12	4	Glider with one missing eye	-
RG5	-	Ants	Propped open
RG8	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair
RG9	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG10	-	Old nest material	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG11	3	Nest covered over slightly	-
RG12	-	Nest material	-

TOTAL GLIDERS = 15

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = 26

NEXT MONTHS CHECK : Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May



*Kara and Asha taking some time by Jackson's Creek at the end of the day.*