

ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

October 2013
(conducted 8th November)

It was a bit cooler than we expected when we arrived at the Park for the October sugar glider check. Asha, Rowan and I arrived at the park at 9am hoping to make up some extra tree frames for some of our left over Black wattles. We ended up making bout 15 before Terry arrived and we began our nest box inspection.



Rowan, Terry and Asha inspecting BW2

We began across the creek, as we haven't checked the boxes over there in a few months because the creek has been too high. The Super box (BW2) that we placed up in September was hanging on an angle on the tree. It was disappointing to see, however we are learning and trying different ideas so that we can improve the nest boxes being put up. We now are looking at securing the box at both bottom and top to help stabilise, especially on some of those wild and windy days.

The box was also empty and didn't show any signs of sugar gliders just yet.

Whilst across the creek we also checked up on the Black Wattles that were planted in July. Unfortunately, many of the tree frames had been blown over and a few of the plants had been eaten. Last month when we checked on them, they all seemed to be doing quite well. We spent some time replacing the small pegs with much larger ones, hoping that they will secure the tree frames a lot better and also replaced some of the wattles.



Rowan and Asha fixing one of the tree frames



Rowan, Asha and Kara re-pegging tree frames

Once all the tree frames and Black wattles had been taken care of, we proceeded to check the nest boxes. BW6 was empty and full of old nest material, so we continued along to box 8, which was repaired and placed up last month. It however was empty.



Kara and Rowan Inspecting box 8

Box 10 was next and it was thrilling to see 4 gliders sleeping inside. It is great to see them utilising the boxes across the creek.



Box 10 – a happy family of gliders

We are hoping to expand the next boxes all the way along Jackson's creek to the confluence at Sydenham Park. The aim is to create connectivity and a corridor for glider movements between the two parks. There are currently some nesting boxes at Sydenham Park, however whether there are gliders using them is unknown.

Back on Main Flat, we stayed as one team and started checking the boxes. There were a few next boxes full of eucalypt leaves. MF6 which was repaired and placed back up last month, was full of fresh nest material, a promising sign.



MF6 full of fresh eucalypt leaves

Moving along, SG1, MF5 and box 5 were full of ants and were propped open with a stick. SG2 was once again home to 5 gliders. One of the gliders looks like it may have been a young from last year's breeding season.



Box 5 full of ants



SG2 with 5 gliders inside

Asha and Terry moved along and checked the nest boxes that we are unable to use the inspection camera with whilst Rowan and I checked the others that support the camera. Checking SG5, Asha found gliders inside.

There was a female who is completely missing one eye, while the other eye is completely clouded over; almost like a cataract. At the time I thought it was the same female we had seen on a previous check, however now I am uncertain as the other female had a missing right eye, but the left eye appeared completely normal. So, is it the same animal and over the past few months her good eye has deteriorated or are they just two different animals?

We regularly see males with this cloudy eye problem and now we are beginning to see problems in females. It is definitely an interesting find and why the gliders in the park, particularly the males have cloudy eyes is unknown.



SG5 -a very protective female with eye problems



Female in box 12 back in May with a missing right eye and perfect left eye



SG5 in May with glider with cloudy left eye

Also in the May report we recorded a glider with a cloudy left eye in SG5. Could this be the same glider we seen this month? As you can see in the photo above, we are unable to see its right eye. It's just a thought, but you can see just how complicated things can get. We now may have more than one glider with a missing eye and we do know that there are definitely multiple gliders presenting cloudy eyes.

Moving along.....

Rowan and I moved along Main Flat checking MF2 which we placed up last month. It unfortunately was empty. Crossing the track and looking in SG6, we all hoped that we would find the family with young still inside. But, when we opened it, they had obviously had moved on.



MF3- 4 gliders, including male with a cloudy right eye

The next box, MF3 is located close to SG6. When Rowan and I placed the camera inside we were delighted to find a family of gliders.

Although we couldn't determine if there were any young, hopefully this is the same family from SG6. We have taken video footage of the gliders moving around inside the box and will share it with you all shortly!!

We loaded up the ute and drove across to Red Gum Flat. Box 12, RG5 and RG6 were all empty. RG7, which was made by Abi a few months ago finally had some sugar gliders inside.



RG7 with 3 gliders inside

Once again, our resident Brushtail possum was there to meet us in RG9.



Terry had to leave by 2.30pm for work, which left us to check the last few boxes. RG10 & RG11 were empty and RG12 had two gliders inside.



RG12 with two gliders

Once all of the boxes were checked, Rowan, Asha and I decided to plant a few Black Wattles long Red Gum Flat since we had made up so many tree frames earlier in the day. It started to rain just as we began planting, but we continued along hoping that the rain would help to water them in. We managed to plant 5 wattles before having to pack up all our gear and get home.

Although it was cold and wet, we had a great day checking the nest boxes, planting some wattles and fixing all the tree frames. A very successful and enjoyable day.

We will be having two more checks before Christmas.

Thanks to Rowan, Asha and Terry for all their help.

~ Kara ~

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

Date - 8/11/13

Main Flat- left side of track from Pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
2	-	Nest material	-
MF6	-	Fresh nest material	-
3	-	Empty, Nest material	-
5	-	Ants, Nest material	Propped open
SG1	-	Ants	Propped open
SG2	5	Nest material	-
6	-	Nest material	-
SG3	1	NEST MAERIAL	-
MF5	-	Ants	Propped Open
SG5	2	Nest material, female with missing eye	-
SG4	-	Stick removed	-
MF4	-	Empty, nest material	-
MF2	-	Empty	-

Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
SG6	-	Empty	-
MF3	4+	Some nest material	-
7	-	Empty, few ants	-
4	-	Bees	-
MF9	-	Nest Material	-

Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
BW1	-	Empty, needs re-positioning	Re-position
BW6	-	Old, nest material	Shorten pipe
BW2	-	N/A	-
8	-	Empty	-
10	4		Needs new bolt

Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
11	-	Ringtail possum nest	-
12	-	Nest material	-
RG5	-	Empty	-
RG6	-	Nest material	-
RG7	3		-
RG8	-		Remove
RG9	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG10	-	Old nest material	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG11	-	Nest material	-
RG12	2+	Nest material, covered over too much to tell	-

TOTAL GLIDERS = **21**

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = **32**

NEXT MONTHS CHECK : To be advised!



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