

ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

January & February 2014
(conducted 13th February)

After a nice and long break over the New Year the team headed to the park to begin this year's first nest box inspection.



Firstly though, January proved to be an exciting time for Asha and I. We were honoured with a Brimbank Council Australia Day Environmental Achievement Award for all the work we have been undertaking at the Organ Pipes with the Sugar Glider Monitoring Program. The ceremony took place at Overnewton Castle in Keilor and was definitely a night to remember!



Asha, Terry and I met up at the park last Thursday for our first check of the year. We decided to combine January and February's check/working bee, as we had such a long break over the Christmas period.

We started across Jackson's Creek on Black Wattle Flat, where we removed our super box BW1. We decided it needed to be positioned on another tree to ensure its stability. We were also able to shorten the entry pipe on BW5, as it was too long for the inspection camera to enter. We also were able to finally remove BW2, which used to be full of bees.



Repositioned box – BW1

After conducting some box maintenance, fixing BW1 and removing BW2, we continued to check the other nest boxes on BW Flat. Once again we were delighted to find a family of gliders in box 8. Since placing this box up it has proven to be quite optimal for the gliders, which is a great sign.



Box 8- Happy gliders

We then moved along to box 10, to our surprise there was a Gould's bat inside. Terry noticed a band on the bat and we have passed this information onto the bat team.



Box 10 – a Gould's Bat

After nearly 2 hours across the creek, we headed back to Main Flat for a cuppa. As Terry had to leave early to get to work, we decided to place up the other 2 boxes that had been repaired before he had to leave. The new MF1 was placed up just right of the Organ Pipes, as we need some boxes in between where Main Flat ends and Red Gum Flat begins.....creating connectivity between the two areas.

It was all fun and games until I spilt the box containing the drill bits everywhere, so while Asha and Terry placed up MF1, I got the fun job of reorganising Terry's drill bit container!!



MF1 in its new position near the Pipes



When it all goes pear shaped!

The last box to be put up was RG8, this box was taken over by a brushtail possum months ago and we have been waiting for the opportunity to remove the box and fix it up.....now we can put it back up for gliders!



Terry placing up RG8

About 4pm Terry had to leave for work, so we drove towards Tessellated pavement to turn the vehicle around and amazingly there was a giant Red Gum tree branch that had fallen across the track. It also took out a branch on the tree opposite.



Terry and Asha inspecting the damage.



It just missed the sign!

We also picked up box 10 which had fallen into the bushes near Rossette Rock. We have been wanting to reposition this box for quite some time now.

Once Terry had left, Asha and I began to conduct a nest box check on the remaining boxes. For something different we started along Red Gum Flat and worked our way backwards. Just near Tessellated pavement we spotted a Ringtail possum asleep in its drey.

Checking RG12 we were excited to find 4 gliders and next, RG11 had 1 lone glider inside. Yet again, RG9 was home to our resident Brushtail possum.



RG12 - 4 gliders inside



RG11 – 1 male with a box all to himself!

Moving along to RG7, the lid was open when we got to it... wondering why, we manoeuvred the inspection camera over the opened box.

On closer examination, a brushtail possum face appeared on our screen. The possum had managed to hijack this glider box and call it its own!



One happy brushtail in RG7.

We continued along Red Gum Flat, checking RG6. There were 5 sugar gliders inside, including one with quite a white tip on the tail. Sugar gliders unlike squirrel gliders do occasionally have white tips on their tails and for a moment we were unsure of what was in the box. We don't usually witness the gliders with such bright white tips on their tails. This box was also home to the female with the right missing eye.



RG6 – 5 gliders, including one with a missing right eye.

The last 3 boxes along Red Gum Flat, Box 11, 12 and RG5 turned up 1 sugar glider and another bat, which didn't have a band.



Box 11- another bat inside!

Loading the ladder back into the ute, we headed towards Main Flat to check the remaining boxes. SG6 yet again was home to 2 gliders. It is great to see the gliders utilising the majority of the boxes.



SG6 – 2 gliders nice and cosy

We used the ladder to check all the boxes that are not yet suitable for the inspection camera, and then we came along later and checked the rest with the camera. Checking MF3 with the inspection camera we were a little concerned to see ants and some fur, and on further inspection there was a deceased glider inside the box. This was the only casualty of the day and we can

assume that the recent extreme hot weather is a likely cause.

There were ants in MF2 and SG4 and another 8 boxes had just nest material inside. Looking into SG1 we were excited to see another 2 gliders.



MF5 – an empty nest



SG1 – Gliders all curled up

It was quite exciting once we got to the last 2 boxes. Both box 2 and MF6 had 3 gliders in each, so 6 in total. All in all we managed to put up 2 new boxes, remove 2 old ones, relocate 1 and inspect 35 in total. It was a nice way to finish of the long day.....but it wasn't over yet!



Box 2- Can you see all 3 sets of ears?!



A family of gliders in MF6

Asha and I finished up about 6.50pm and headed to the main gate where we met up with the 1st Sunbury Scouts. They were all eager to come along and see what wildlife they could see after dark. The scouts split into 2 groups and Asha and I took one group at a time to look for wildlife, talk about our role at the park and check some nesting boxes with the inspection camera. All the scouts were well behaved and respected all the animals that we did see..... Gliders, bats, wallabies and Kangaroos.

After a long and rewarding 9 hours at the park, we headed home! It was a great start to the year and we were pleased to see the gliders still doing well after all the heat we have been having.

~Kara, Asha & Terry~

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

Date - 13/02/14

Main Flat- left side of track from Pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
2	3+	Nest material	-
MF6	3+	Fresh nest material	-
3	-	Nest material	-
5	-	Nest material	-
SG1	2	Nest material	-
SG2	-	Nest material	-
6	-	Nest material	-
SG3	-	NEST MAERIAL	-
MF5	-	Nest material covered over	-
SG5	1	Lots of nest material	-
SG4	-	Ants	Propped open
MF4	-	Covered over nest material	-
MF2	-	Ants	Propped open
MF1	-	Place up	-

Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
SG6	2	Nest material	-
MF3	-	Some nest material, dead glider	-
7	-	Empty	-
4	-	Bees	-
MF9	-	Nest Material	-

Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
BW1	-	Empty	Re-located
BW6	-	Old, nest material. Shortened entrance pipe	-
BW2	-	Empty	Replace
BW5	-	Removed	
8	4	Nest material	-
10	-	1 Goulds bat with tag, nest Material	Needs new bolt

Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
11	-	1 bat, old Ringtail possum nest	-
12	1	Nest material	-
RG5	-	Empty	-
RG6	5	Possibly young present, 1 missing right eye	-
RG7	-	1 Brushtail possum	-
RG8	-	Placed up	-
RG9	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG10	-	Removed	-
RG11	1	Nest material	-
RG12	4	1 male swollen left eye	-

TOTAL GLIDERS = **26**

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = **35**

NEXT MONTHS CHECK : To be advised!



If you would like to read more about our achievement and other members of the Brimbank community honoured with Australia Day awards, please visit the link below:

http://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/News_Updates/MedMe_Relases_2014/January_2014/Brimbank_Australia_Day_Award_winners_announced