



ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

September 2014

(conducted 4th October)

It was a beautiful Saturday morning and we had four volunteers ready to help us check nest boxes. Terry, Kara and I met with two first-time glider monitors (Milly and Aliyah) and two old-hands (Rowan and Jill) at the visitors centre at 10 am. We all headed down to the pump shed together to start checking Main Flat.



Sunny weather on Main Flat

We quickly discovered that one of the ladders was missing, which meant that we would all have to stick together to check boxes. While Terry went to the creek to do his Water Watch check, we started checking boxes using the other ladder and our handy pole camera.



Asha, Rowan and Aliyah preparing to check MF6 using the pole camera, while Jill checks out a nearby Dusky Woodswallow

As soon as we turned on the pole camera we knew something was wrong. The light which lets the camera see inside the box was flickering. Nevertheless, we decided to give it a go and we were able to see enough inside Box 2 enough to tell that it only contained nest material. However, by the time we got to MF6 one of the two lights had died completely and we could not see inside the box well enough to determine what was in there. We are going to try to get the lights fixed before our next check.

All in all, the day wasn't off to a great start, but everyone was still keeping high spirits and looking forward to finding some gliders. We now had to use one ladder to check all 36 of the glider boxes

that we now have up in the park. It was a good thing we had all those volunteers to help carry it!



Checking SG1 on Main Flat

We were especially excited to be checking boxes this time around, as this is the time of year when we usually see lots of evidence of breeding (aka babies!). Our only sighting of a juvenile glider on Main Flat was in SG1, along with two other gliders. This box has been favoured by adults with young in previous years as well.



Two adults and one juvenile in SG1

On the other side of the track on Main Flat we found four gliders- two in MF3 and two in MF9. Eight other boxes contained fresh nest material,

which means that they are probably still being used regularly by Sugar gliders.



Two gliders in MF3



Two gliders covered up in MF9



Empty nest material in SG3

It was a beautiful weekend, so there were lots of people out enjoying the park. We had a few people take interest in what we were doing and it was great to be able to show them some photos of the gliders in the boxes we were checking and tell them about the Sugar glider program.

SG6 was still be used as a cosy bed by a Ring-tailed possum. We have decided to leave him/her there for now, because if we remove the stick that is propping open the box he will be in a bit of a tricky situation. Three other boxes were providing homes to ants, so we propped them open with sticks to deter them.



Ring-tailed possum in SG6



Lots of ants in MF5!

By this point it was lunch-time, so we had a rest with coffee and Milly's home-made biscuits at the pump shed. Aliyah and Milly then had to head off, so Kara gave them a lift back up to the car-park while we got ready to cross the creek. Thanks to Tamara and Parks Victoria we had three new pairs of waders to try out!

The first couple of boxes we checked on Black Wattle Flat were fairly uneventful, but things got really exciting when we got to Box 8! One adult glider had their hands full with four juveniles in the box!



Busy parent in Box 8!!! Can you spot all four juveniles?

We had three new boxes to check over the creek, which we had put up last month. They are the three furthest along the creek (BW11, BW12 and BW13). BW11 and BW13, which are the new horizontal design we are trying, were both empty this time.

BW12 was put very high up in the tree and was quite tricky to reach, but the result was worth it! We found four adult gliders snuggled at the

bottom of this vertical box. It was great to see gliders inhabiting this box so soon after it was put up!

While we were on Black Wattle Flat it was good to see some of the Black Wattles we planted doing really well, even though they haven't all made it.



One of our Black Wattles looking happy



Beautiful spot on Black Wattle Flat



Four gliders peeking up in BW12

Once we got back to the other side of the creek Terry had to head off to work. The rest of us decided to check Red Gum Flat, starting at the end closest to the Tessellated Pavement and working our way back. Terry drove the ladder up there for us on his Ute before he left.

The first box we looked in was RG12, which contained 7 gliders! There were 3 adults and 4 young. They seemed pretty relaxed, so we managed to get some great photos. Once again, passers-by were interested in what we were doing, so we were able to share our delight and photos with them.



3 adults and 4 young in RG12



Doesn't seem to be much wiggle room in here



Little nose peeking out from under a tail



Peacefully sleeping despite our interruption!

We thought that the Brush-tailed possum which has been living in RG8 was squashed enough, but it appeared she had enough room to share. She is now living with a juvenile, although I'm sure once the young one gets bigger they won't want to share for much longer!



Mother and juvenile Brush-tailed possum in RG8

Unfortunately it had become a very long day, because we had been slowed down by the missing ladder and camera. We ran out of time to check the last four boxes. We hope that our data is still fairly accurate. It certainly still reflects the trend we have previously noticed of numbers

increasing around this time of year with the breeding season.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, you were an especially big help when we really needed it!

Thanks for reading!

~Asha, Kara and Terry~

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

Date - 04/09/14

Main Flat- Left side of track from Pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
2	-	Nest material	-
MF6	-	Nest material	-
3	-	Nest material	-
5	-	Few leaves	-
SG1	3	Nest material (1 Juvenile male)	-
SG2	-	Nest material, few ants	Propped open
6	-	Old nest material	-
SG3	-	Covered over nest (empty)	-
MF5	-	Lots of ants	Propped open
SG5	-	Lots of nest material	-
SG4	-	Nest material	Re-locate
MF4	-	Nest material	-
MF2	-	Ants	Move higher up
MF1	-	Not checked	-

Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
SG6	-	Ringtail possum	-
MF3	2	Nest material	-
7	-	Empty	-
4	-	Bees	-
MF9	2	Nest Material	Latch needs fixing

Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
BW1	-	Covered over nest	-
BW6	-	Old, nest material, was emptied out	-
BW5	-	Removed	-
8	5	1 Adult, 4 young	Replace
BW9	-	Empty	Placed up
10	-	Still a few ants	-

Black Wattle Flat Continued -

BW11	-	Empty	-
BW12	4	Nest material	-
BW13	-	Empty	-

Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
11	-	Not checked	-
12	-	Not checked	-
RG5	-	Not checked	-
RG6	-	Not checked	-
RG7	-	Empty	-
RG8	-	Brushtail possums, Mother & Young	-
RG9	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG10	-	Nest material	-
RG11	-	Empty nest, older leaves	-
RG12	7	3 adults, 4 young	-

Possum Boxes – Located on Red Gum Flat

Box	Possums	Comments	Action Required
P1	-		-
P2	-		-
P3	-		-

TOTAL GLIDERS = 23

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = 36

**NEXT MONTH'S CHECK: Tuesday,
November 11th 2014**

