

ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

November 2014
(conducted 11th November)

It was a chilly start to the morning for our November glider check. This month we were once again joined by Rowan; a now regular volunteer as well as Bernice, the volunteer coordinator with Parks Victoria.



Terry, Asha, Rowan and Bernice starting the day

While Terry collected some water samples for Waterwatch, the 4 of us began our nest box check. Starting with box 2, we were excited to find 5 sugar gliders inside; there were also a few young in this box as well. It's always exciting to see the gliders breeding within the park. It's a great indicator that the park provides the right conditions and resources to keep the population growing. Moving along, MF6 only had nest material inside but the next nest box, box 3 had 2 gliders in it.

When we checked the boxes in September, only 3 boxes on Main Flat had gliders in them. Luckily this month we saw a few more, there were 5 boxes with a total of 14 gliders.



Box 2 – a family of gliders

In box 3, there could possibly be more than 2 gliders, but we were unable to see 100%.



Box 3 – Two or more gliders inside

The majority of the other boxes along Main Flat are full of nesting material. We continued to check these boxes until we came to MF4. There were also 5 sugar gliders inside this box. MF4 is one of our most 'popular' boxes; we regularly see gliders in the box and have so for the past 3 years.

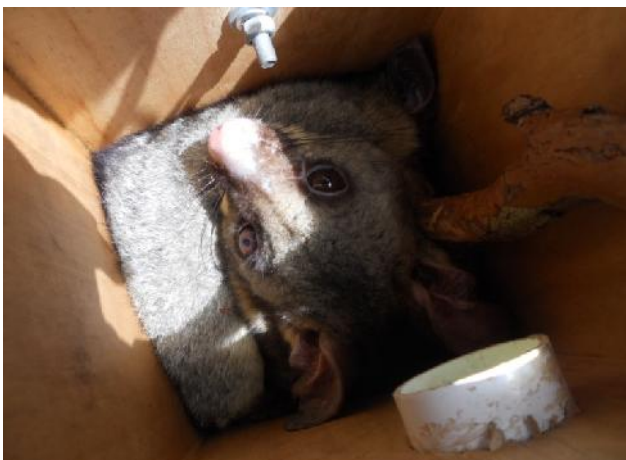


SG5 – A great picture of a perfect sugar glider nest



MF4 – A happy family of gliders in this box

We came to our last box along the left side of the track along Main Flat, MF1. This is a new box that we placed up about 4 months ago; it was propped open with a stick last month as it was full of ants. This month as we approached the box to remove the stick, we saw a tiny pink nose poking out at the top! A brushtail possum has taken advantage of the open box and has made a home.



After checking the final box along the left side of Main Flat, we stopped for some morning tea at the picnic ground in view of the beautiful Organ Pipes. We were able to share our project ideas with Bernice and she was very helpful in giving us some great advice of how we can improve and move forward with this project.

A packet of biscuits and a couple of cuppa's later we jumped back into the ute and moved along to Red Gum Flat. But as we were getting into the vehicle we noticed that the dusky wood swallow nest that we saw last year, once again had chicks in it!



A Dusky wood swallow nest with 2 chicks poking out of the top.

The first box checked along Red Gum Flat is always RG5, it took a number of months but we are finally starting to see glider activity within this box. No gliders this month, but a lovely nest.



RG5 full of fresh nest material

Moving along to box 12, we were surprised when we opened the lid!

Inside there was a nest, but it was a birds nest. Asha was able to look inside and see that there was a little egg inside. We often find a number of different mammal species in our boxes but have never had a bird!



Box 12 - A bird nest and egg

Rowan, Bernice and I continued checking the glider boxes along Red Gum Flat as Terry and Asha checked the new possum boxes

RG7, usually home to a brushtail possum had 2 Ringtail possums inside this month. Asha and Terry were delighted to see that finally the Brushtail possum in RG8 had moved across the path into a one of our specially designed Possum boxes.



2 Ringtail possums in RG7

We continued on, checking the last 4 boxes on Red Gum Flat. RG9 had our resident Brushtail inside, whilst RG11 was empty.

Inside RG10 there were 2 gliders. This is the first time we have had gliders inside this box since we removed it a few months back in May, repaired it and placed it back up. RG10 is the box right next to Rosette Rock, it used to be on the tree only about 1m off the ground. Since it has been repaired and placed higher on the tree we have seen so much activity and now actually have gliders inside!



2 gliders in the new RG10

Arriving at our last box, RG12; Bernice received the honour of checking inside. She was delighted to see two little faces looking up at her. An adult and its young were in the box.



RG12- An adult and young

After checking all the boxes along Red Gum Flat, Bernice had to return to the office. It was great having her join in on our day and we appreciate all the feedback and support she is giving us.

Once we said goodbye to Bernice, we stopped for another cuppa! Then we decided to head across the creek.



Asha, Rowan and Terry on Black Wattle Flat

BW1 is the first box we check along Black Wattle Flat, it was full of nest material which is great! Once we got to BW6 we could see that it was swarming with bees. For the time 'beeing' all we can do is leave the box and bees as they are.

Since placing up box 8 across the creek it has always had gliders in it and this month was no different. There were 5 gliders, including 1 juvenile.



Box 8 - A family of gliders with at least one young

We were excited to check one of our new boxes BW9, it's designed differently to our other boxes and we have been waiting patiently to see if any gliders have moved in yet. But unfortunately it was completely empty.

We removed the stick from box 10 as the ants have now moved on. BW11 another of our new boxes was also empty. The next box, BW12 was home to 4 gliders. This box has proved to be quite optimal; it has had gliders in it consistently since being placed up.



Box10 – a happy family of 4

Our last newly designed box BW13 and our last box on Black Wattle Flat gave us a great surprise.... it was full of fresh nest material. This is great news knowing that the gliders are investigating this box. Hopefully we will eventually start to see them in this box as well as in BW9 and BW11. We took a slow walk back to the creek, crossed back over and began checking the last 5 boxes for the day.



BW13- a fresh pile of eucalyptus leaves ready for some gliders!



It's super exciting when we find gliders in our boxes!!

Back across the creek, we finished off the remaining boxes along the right side of the track on Main Flat. MF1, SG6 and box 7 were all empty; however both MF3 and MF9 had 1 glider in each.



MF3 - 1 glider, possibly more



MF9- 1 glider all curled up

Box 4 has always had bees in it since we began officially monitoring boxes 3 years ago, but on a recent Bat box inspection Robert Bender discovered that the bees had since moved out. Now we are able to remove the box, clean out the honeycomb and relocate the new box to another area of the park.



Box 4 full of honeycomb (credit: Robert Bender)

It was a great day, and we managed to check all of our nesting boxes and even had time to sit for a few cuppas! In the future as the program expands and we place up boxes towards the extremities of the park, we need to figure a way to check so many boxes all in one day. Thanks to Rowan and Bernice for coming along and lending a hand, it's much appreciated. Hopefully we will fit in one more glider working bee before the end of the year.

~Kara, Asha & Terry~

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

Date - 11/11/14

Main Flat- Left side of track from Pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
2	5	2 adults – right cloudy eye 3 juveniles	-
MF6	-	Nest material	-
3	2+	Nest material	-
5	-	Few leaves	To be relocated
SG1	-	Covered over nest	-
SG2	-	Nest material	-
6	-	Lots of nest material	-
SG3	-	Covered over nest (empty)	-
MF5	-	Fresh nest material	-
SG5	-	Nest material	-
SG4	-	Nest material	Re-locate
MF4	5	3 adults – cloudy eye 2 juveniles	-
MF2	-	Brushtail possum	Move higher up
MF1	-	Ants	Propped open

Main Flat- Left side of track from Organ Pipes

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
SG6	-	Empty ringtail nest	Put carpet on lid
MF3	1+	Nest material	-
7	-	Empty	-
4	-	No bees anymore	Clean out
MF9	1	Nest Material	Latch needs fixing

Black Wattle Flat- Across creek from pump shed

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
BW1	-	Nest Material	-
BW6	-	Bees	Carpet on id
BW5	-	Removed	-
8	5	Possibly 1 juvenile or more	-
BW9	-	Empty	-
10	-	Empty, stick removed	-

Black Wattle Flat Continued -

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

Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
11	-	Empty	-
12	-	Birds nest with 1 egg	-
RG5	-	Covered over nest, empty	-
RG6	-	Not checked	-
RG7	-	2 ringtail possums	-
RG8	-	Empty	Latch lid
RG9	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
RG10	2	Nest material	-
RG11	-	Empty nest, older leaves	-
RG12	2	1 adult, 1 juvenile	-

Possum Boxes – Located on Red Gum Flat

Box	Possums	Comments	Action Required
P1	1	Brushtail possum	-
P2	-		-
P3	-		-

TOTAL GLIDERS = 27

TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = 37 + 3 possum boxes



From left: Bernice, Kara, Terry, Asha and Rowan in front of Rosette Rock.