

# ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK

## SUGAR GLIDER MONITORING

**September 2015**  
**(conducted 8<sup>th</sup> September)**

FINALLY, we were back at the park and keen to check some sugar glider boxes! Since November last year we were asked by Parks to put a hold on our monitoring until we had obtained a working with heights qualification. This was to ensure we could work using the ladder safely. After a few months of trying to find a suitable program, Parks Victoria sent 3 of us on a day course to get the qualification. Once we had the certificate and a few meetings to clarify work safety, we were given the go ahead to continue monitoring.

We decided that we would begin monitoring in spring; mainly because we tend to see more gliders after the cold winter.....So, let's get on with what happened on the day....

Terry, Asha, myself and a new Volunteer Danni meet at the work compound at 9.00am, gathering gear and discussing plans for the day. We decided to head to the VC, open up and have a cuppa awaiting other volunteers to arrive at 9.30. Rowan our regular volunteer met us, as well as a new volunteer Kirby and the Green Army team who have been working around the Organ Pipes planting and removing weeds over the past few months.

After a quick cuppa and some introductions, we headed down into the park to begin our monitoring. We had a safety talk and explained how we would run the day, using our camera and

the ladder, with only those qualified to climb the ladder checking the boxes that needed it.

As always, box 2 was the first to be checked. It was empty, but had a lovely nest inside.



***Box 2, an empty nest.***

Moving along, we looked inside MF6 and found another empty nest.



***Our team checking inside MF6.***



The next few boxes were empty but had nest material inside. SG2 finally gave us some gliders for the day. As this box is not suitable for the pole camera, Asha popped on the harness and we used the ladder to inspect the box.



***SG2 – 2 gliders inside***

A couple of boxes along SG3 also had 1 glider inside. In the picture you can just see a tiny little nose poking out. It is possible there were more sugar gliders inside, but as the nest was still quite covered over from the cooler weather it really was hard to determine how many were in there.



***SG3- a tiny nose poking out from the nest.***

We continued on looking inside the rest of the boxes along the left hand side of the track mainly with the pole camera, but also the ladder.

All had nest material inside, which is still a positive sign, but no gliders. It was great however, to see while walking around that so many of the Wattles were in flower. Acacia species such as Black Wattle found in the park are a known food source for Sugar gliders, an important part of their diet especially this time of year when raising young.



***The Green Army team checking the camera.***



***A beautiful wattle out in flower.***

After checking all the boxes along Main Flat, the group of us walked to the Organ Pipes where Terry spoke about how they were formed and their importance to our volunteers that have never been to the Organ Pipes NP before. We thought it would be a great opportunity for a group picture, so we set the camera up in front of the pipes.





***'The Team' checking out the Organ Pipes.***

Once the perfect picture had been taken, we decided it would be time to stop for a cuppa. While sitting in the picnic area enjoying morning tea, we were joined by another volunteer, new FOOPs member Doug. We also said goodbye to Kirby, who had to leave for the afternoon.



***Hard at work!!***

We loaded all the gear back onto Terry's ute and continued to Red Gum Flat, checking RG5 first as always. It had nest material inside, but no gliders. Moving along we checked inside box 11&12 and found only nesting material too. However, when we reached RG6 we could see at least 1 glider moving in amongst the leaf litter. Unfortunately though, we were unable to take a clear picture to put in this report. The gliders were really hiding

this month! When we got to RG7, it was upside down on the tree. It will need to come down and be repaired on the next working bee day.



***Box 11 with a nest inside.***

As we moved along Red Gum flat we took it in turns of checking inside the boxes with the pole camera, which is such a time saver when walking around and looking inside our boxes. As usual RG8 and RG9 both had Brushtail possums in them. It was only a few months ago that we repaired RG8 and put it back up for the gliders, but the possums chewed out the entrance hole and called it home again!



***The curious possum in RG9!***

Checking inside our 3 specially designed possum boxes, we did manage to see one happy Brushtail calling it home!



Once again, as we reached Rosette Rock, Terry gave our volunteers a talk about Rosette Rock and its formation before moving along to our last 3 boxes on Red Gum Flat. RG10 & RG11 had nest material inside, but our lucky last box RG12 had 2 gliders inside... (finally!)



***RG12- two gliders cuddled up inside their nest.***

We packed up Terry's ute again with all the gear and headed back to towards the pump shed on Main Flat. We had 6 boxes to look inside on the right hand side of the track on Main Flat before we got back to the shed. Three had nest material inside, one had a ringtail possum and the last one had some sugar glider fur in there.



***RG9 – some old glider fur.***

Once we reached our vehicles back at the pump shed, we said goodbye to a few more volunteers including the Green Army team. It was great to have so many keen helpers this time round. After another quick break, Terry, Asha, Rowan, Doug, Danni and I loaded up our 4WD ute and headed across the creek to check the final 8 boxes. First was BW1, which surprisingly had 4, possibly more gliders inside. We could even see at least 1 juvenile as well.



***BW1 with a family of Sugar Gliders inside.***

When we got to BW6, it had seemed to mysteriously disappear from the tree without a trace....it is possible we removed it, but none of us could remember actually taking it down! Hmmm freaky!

Box 8 like MF9 on Main Flat had some old glider fur in it; it could possibly have been from a dead glider that was once inside, however we couldn't see any evidence of remains. Asha popped on some gloves and gave the box a good clean out. Hopefully the gliders will now use the fresh box again.



***Sugar glider fur inside box 8.***

The next box to be checked was BW9, one of our newer boxes. Inside were 2 gliders, including another young glider.



***BW9 – Can you see the juveniles foot?!***

Moving along, we looked inside the last 4 boxes. Box 10, BW11 and BW12 all had nest material inside, which is so great to see as these boxes are some of our furthest boxes along Jackson's Creek towards Sydenham Park. It means the gliders are moving around and seeking suitable nesting sites.

We managed to save the best until last, BW13. There were 5 gliders inside this box including 2 juveniles! It makes all the monitoring and maintenance of boxes worth it when you see the gliders breeding successfully. It was such a great finish to the day. Although we didn't get to see many clear pictures of gliders, we were still lucky enough to record 17. This is average for this time of year. We did expect to see a few more being spring, however since the cooler weather has been sticking around a bit longer this year most of the nests were still covered over and hard to see inside. We hope to do one more check before Christmas as next year we will be only checking inside boxes 4 times a year, or once a season.

Thank you to all our volunteers who helped on the day, it was much appreciated. We cannot wait to see what we find next check!

~Kara, Asha & Terry~

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

Date – 08/09/2015

### 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	To be relocated
SG1	-	Nest material	Flimsy latch
SG2	2	Nest material	-
6	-	Few leaves	-
SG3	1+	Some ants	-
MF5	-	Nest material	-
SG5	-	Nest material	-
SG4	-	Nest material, covered over	-
MF4	-	Nest material	-
MF2	-	Leaves	-
MF1	-	Nest material	Propped open

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

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
SG6	-	1 Ringtail	-
MF3	-	Nest material	-
7	-	Nest material	-
4	-	No bees anymore	Clean out
MF9	-	Nest Material, a bit of fur	-

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

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
BW1	4+	1 juvenile	-
BW6	-		Find it?!
BW5	-	Removed	-
8	-	Cleaned out	-
BW9	2	1 juvenile	-
10	-	Nest material	-



### Black Wattle Flat Continued -

<b>BW11</b>	-	Nest material	-
<b>BW12</b>	-	Nest material	-
<b>BW13</b>	<b>5</b>	Nest material	-

### Red Gum Flat

Box	Gliders	Comments	Action Required
<b>11</b>	-	Nest material	-
<b>12</b>	-	Old bird nest	-
<b>RG5</b>	-	Covered over nest, empty	-
<b>RG6</b>	<b>1+</b>		-
<b>RG7</b>	-	Upside down	Remove
<b>RG8</b>	-	Brushtail possum	-
<b>RG9</b>	-	Brushtail possum	Lid needs repair, reposition box
<b>RG10</b>	-	Nest material	-
<b>RG11</b>	-	Nest material	-
<b>RG12</b>	<b>2+</b>		-

### Possum Boxes – Located on Red Gum Flat

Box	Possums	Comments	Action Required
<b>P1</b>	<b>1</b>	Brushtail possum	-
<b>P2</b>	-		-
<b>P3</b>	-	Leaves	-

**TOTAL GLIDERS = 17**

**TOTAL BOXES CHECKED = 37 + 3 possum boxes**



*The Team taking some time to enjoy Tessellated pavement!*