

**Endangered species**

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**Graham Readfearn**  
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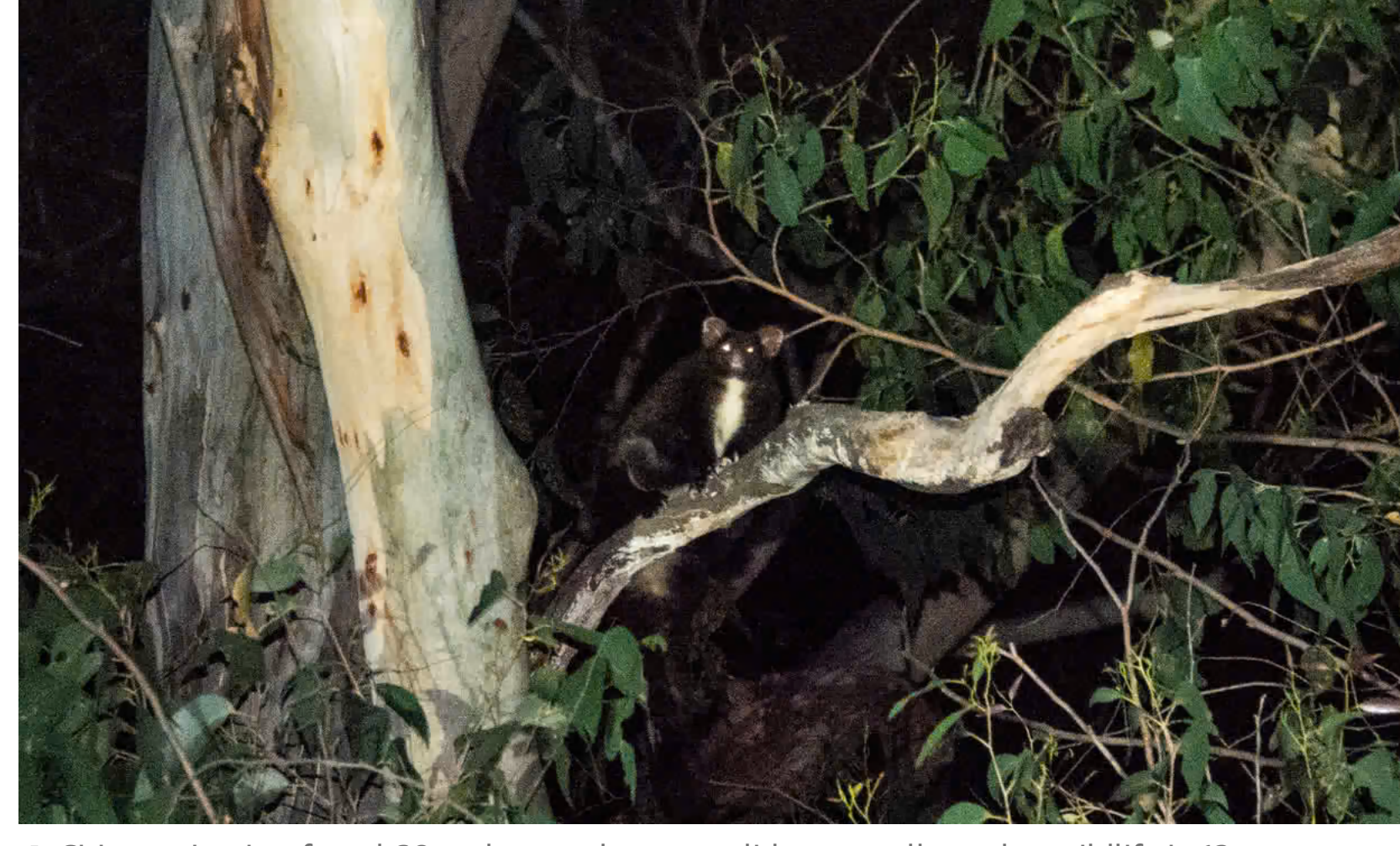
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# Sixty endangered greater gliders found in Victorian forests tagged for logging

Night survey by citizen scientists revealed gliders, which could trigger court injunction to prevent logging in 12 areas

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📷 Citizen scientists found 60 endangered greater gliders as well as other wildlife in 12 areas marked for timber harvesting. Photograph: Lisa Roberts

Citizen scientists have reportedly found about 60 endangered greater gliders in a dozen Victorian areas that have been targeted for logging.

The greater glider - one of the world's largest gliding mammals - was **listed as endangered earlier this year**, only six years after first appearing on the national list of threatened species.

Campaigners say they found about 60 animals during a night survey conducted on Sunday, which should now trigger the terms of a temporary court injunction to prevent logging in the 12 coupes where the gliders were found.

Sue McKinnon, president of campaign group Kinglake Friends of the Forest and one of the surveyors, said: "This has given me hope that we can still find this threatened species. Greater gliders have gone from being considered common only six years ago to endangered."

"The abundance of gliders found by citizen scientists last night is evidence of the disturbing reality: greater gliders and VicForests want the same forests, the few left with big, old trees."

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The **Victorian government is to phase out native forest logging by 2030**, but campaigners argue this is too slow to save the glider.

McKinnon said: "That slide to becoming vulnerable probably took place over only 20 years. But this government has said they will log for another eight years. Those loggers want the same forest that greater gliders need. These places are the only ones left for gliders."

She said historical logging had left a patchwork of habitats, but the spaces between previously logged areas were now being targeted. "It's almost got to the point where the forest is being liquidated."

When the federal government raised the greater glider's threat level to endangered, official advice said in Victoria cumulative impacts of the black summer bushfires, logging and climate change would put pressure on the marsupial's remaining habitat.

Kinglake Friends of the Forest and Environment East Gippsland have an ongoing case against VicForests in the state's supreme court, where they argue the government-owned business has not properly surveyed for threatened species.

In that case, justice Melinda Richards placed a temporary injunction on logging areas where gliders are detected.

On Sunday evening, 66 citizen scientists entered 12 areas that appear either on the Victorian government's current timber harvesting plan, or its proposed plan.

Areas at Toolangi, Black Range, Warburton, Wombat, Alberton West, and East Gippsland were surveyed.

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Surveyors also found swamp wallabies, yellow-bellied gliders, boobook owls, ringtail possums, giant earthworms, lyrebird mounds and micro bats.

In August, the **Victorian government passed laws** to bring tougher penalties on activists trying to block logging activities and these changes will come into force next year.

But Natalie Hogan, a lawyer at Environmental Justice Australia, said those changes also meant citizen scientists carrying out survey work without permission faced fines up to \$11,000 - more than triple the previous penalty of \$3,500.

Hogan said those changes also introduced broader search and seizure powers as well as the ability for authorities to issue bans on individuals entering areas in the future.

She said citizen scientists had a critical role in surveying for wildlife, but those people now faced "harsh and disproportionate penalties".

She said: "Our vital ecosystems are currently facing increasing threats from logging and climate change, all in the wake of devastating bushfires, and citizen science is more important than ever."

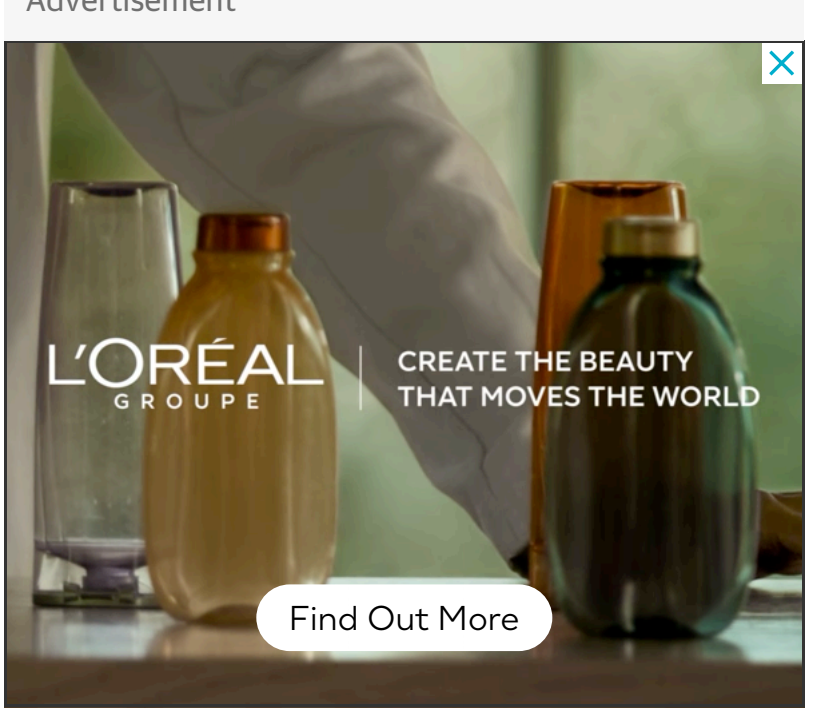
Guardian Australia has requested comment from Victoria's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and VicForests.

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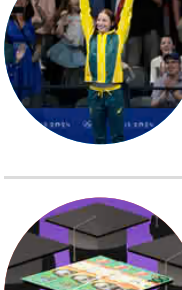
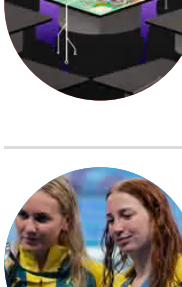
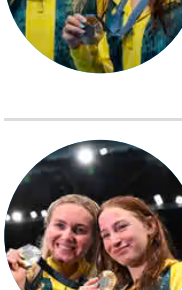

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