

3 October 2022

Citizen scientists find 60 endangered Greater Gliders in mass survey effort across Victoria!



Last night 66 citizen scientists from community groups across Victoria took part in a coordinated big night of surveying for endangered Greater Gliders. Surveys were carried out over 12 areas scheduled for logging, across 6 locations from Toolangi, Black Range near Taggerty, Warburton in the Central Highlands, Alberton West in Gippsland, Colquhoun State Forest in East Gippsland, and Wombat State Forest in the Central West.

60 Greater Gliders were found across the state! Many of these areas will now be temporarily protected by the Kinglake Friends of Forest, Environment East Gippsland and Gippsland Environment Group court case.

President of [Kinglake Friends of the Forest](#), Sue McKinnon, says: "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."

"This is a massive community effort to protect our native wildlife from extinction. It is shocking that this work is left up to community members. Making sure that endangered species habitat isn't logged should be the job of government."

Lisa Roberts from [Friends of Bats and Habitat Gippsland](#) said; "We love going out night surveying for Greater Gliders. It's extraordinarily beautiful in the bush at night under bright stars and a moon (even in the cold). We look for eye shine in the night and it's super exciting when we find them!"

"We go out at night surveying for threatened fauna because we're trying to stop logging. It's totally heartbreaking to see bush that we've walked in smashed and clear-felled. Even in the night, logged forest lets in the light, we can see the light of a smashed logged forest from a long way away. Under the canopy of an old intact forest, you only get glimpses of the moon and stars beyond the trees."



The state government does not conduct its own surveys for endangered species before approving logging to go ahead in areas across Victoria. Even when endangered species are found, most receive little or no protection from logging under state laws. [Native forest logging is exempt from Federal Environment Laws under so-called "Regional Forest Agreements"](#). Due to a current court case against state logging agency VicForests, run by community groups Kinglake Friends of the Forest, Environment East Gippsland, and Gippsland Environment Group, confirmed detections of Greater Gliders currently trigger the protection of the forest in which they are found.

The community groups allege that the government logging agency does not survey adequately for Greater Gliders or properly protect them. Expert witness for the community groups, Professor Grant Wardell-Johnson stated in court that Greater Gliders in logging coupes are likely to be dead soon after the logging operation, in some cases from starvation or predation. In July the Greater Glider was uplisted to endangered. Logging of its habitat has been highlighted as a major contributor to an 80% decline of Greater Glider populations over the last 20 years.



The state government has [recently passed new laws that will see harsh penalties for people protesting logging operations](#) as well as citizen scientists surveying in forests scheduled for logging.

Natalie Hogan, lawyer at Environmental Justice Australia, says: "The new laws will not only affect forest protectors engaged in legitimate political expression; they also put the critical role of our citizen scientists in jeopardy as they too face harsh and disproportionate penalties for entering logging coupes to survey for wildlife."

"Citizen scientists, conservationists, environment groups and members of the community who conduct wildlife surveys

play a vital role in collating data for Victoria's Biodiversity Atlas. The observations collated in the Atlas are crucial for government decision-making – showing where wildlife is now and how this has changed over time."

"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."

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The Victorian Forest Alliance recognises that the forests which we work to protect exist on a number of different Sovereign Aboriginal Nations.

We pay our deepest respects to First Nations custodians, and their Elders past and present. We acknowledge that we live and work on stolen land that was never ceded. We are committed to **paying the rent** and encourage other organisations and individuals to consider contributing to move towards justice, truth, equality and liberation for First Nations People.