

# Squirrel Glider: *icon threatened species*



Scientific name:	<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>
Other common names:	Flying Squirrel, Sugar Squirrel, Squirrel Flying Phalanger
Conservation status:	Vulnerable in NSW

## How do I recognise it?

The Squirrel Glider is a medium-sized (40-53cm) nocturnal, gliding possum. Blue-grey to brown-grey above, with a white belly and a black stripe that runs from between the eyes down its back. The Squirrel Glider has a long bushy tail which is sometimes black-tipped. Both sexes are similar in appearance.



(Photo: P Spark / North West Ecological Services)

Within the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment, this species may be confused with the much smaller (31-41cm), but similarly coloured, Sugar Glider (*Petaurus brevipes*). The Squirrel Glider is distinguished however, by its larger size (approximately twice that of the Sugar Glider), its longer more pointed face and broad, fluffy,

tapering tail (not demarcated at the base and/or cylindrical like the Sugar Glider). The Squirrel Glider never has a white-tip to the tail found in some Sugar Gliders.

## Where does it live?

The Squirrel Glider is an arboreal (tree-dwelling) mammal of eastern Australia. Resting during the day in cup-shaped, leaf-lined nests in tree hollows, they emerge at night to forage in tree and understorey canopies almost never coming to the ground. Within the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment it prefers open forests and woodlands of the northern tablelands and western slopes, especially box-ironbark and

riparian woodlands. Key habitat requirements include; abundant tree hollows for refuge and nesting, areas with more than one eucalypt species and/or an understorey of wattles.

## What does it eat?

Squirrel Gliders principally feed on;

- Invertebrates (beetles and their larvae, moths, caterpillars, cicadas and grasshoppers),
- Sugary exudates from insects,
- Sap, gum, pollen and nectar of eucalypts, wattles and/or banksias
- Seeds and fruit
- Small roosting birds, eggs and mice are occasionally eaten.

**Squirrel Gliders inhabit Grassy Box Woodlands with abundant hollows (Photo: W Hawes)**



Important nectar producing trees within the Border Rivers/Gwydir Catchment include: Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), White Box (*Eucalyptus albens*), Grey Box (*Eucalyptus moluccana*), Mugga Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) and Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*).

## Why is it threatened?

The Squirrel Glider was once widespread but sparsely distributed up the east coast from western Vic through NSW to northern Qld, occurring inland as far as the Grampians in Vic and Pilliga in NSW. Its population is currently in decline and its distribution extremely patchy as result of clearing for agriculture and/or urban development. What habitat remains is highly fragmented and continues to be degraded by; inappropriate grazing, logging activities, clearing regrowth and understorey, inappropriate fire-regimes and removal of larger trees for fenceposts and firewood.



Squirrel Gliders can get caught on barbed wire  
(Photo: P Spark / North West Ecological Services)

Loss and fragmentation of habitat removes mature and old growth trees, depriving the Squirrel Gliders of important food resources and nesting sites. It also limits the Squirrel Glider's ability to move across the landscape and makes it more susceptible to predation by foxes and cats.

## Why is our catchment important?

The Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment area supports significant tracts of open forest and woodland habitat, such as the Box-Ironbark Woodlands, essential to the long-term survival of the Squirrel Glider.

## What can I do?

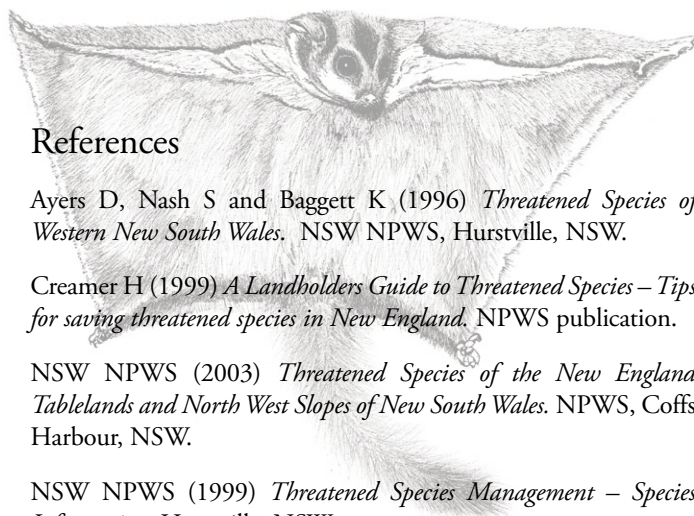
- Retain and improve stands of remnant bushland.
- Control grazing within remnants to encourage

regeneration of trees and understorey shrubs (including wattles).

- Maintain a range of tree age classes within remnant areas.
- Avoid removing hollow bearing trees and larger trees from remnants.
- Connect isolated habitat patches by planting corridors of local native plant species a minimum of 50m wide.
- Control foxes and feral cats in remnant areas.
- Desex domestic cats and keep indoors at night.
- Regulate burning activities to ensure habitat elements are retained in remnant areas.
- Report all sightings of the Squirrel Glider to the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

## But wait there's more...

By protecting and improving habitat for the Squirrel Glider, you will also be protecting and improving habitat for a whole suite of other threatened and declining plants and animals dependent upon hollow bearing trees and forest/woodland ecosystems. These species include: Painted Honeyeater, Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetail, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Turquoise Parrot, Swift Parrot, Hooded Robin, Koala, Little Pied Bat, Greater Long-eared Bat, Pale-headed Snake, and not forgetting the Grassy Box Woodlands themselves.



## References

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