

# The LAMP Post

## WHY WATCH A STAG?

The STAG I am referring to here is not what you may initially have thought. A stag can be a large old tree – alive or dead - that has many hollows, aged branches and trunk with crevasses and bark for our native critters to den and forage through. Damian Michael (Ecologist for Australian National University), who lead a stag watch and spotlight night earlier this year also refers to these trees as *Biological Legacies*.

Squirrel Gliders, like many of Australia's tree dependent animals, are completely reliant on trees with hollows for survival and breeding. Given September is Biodiversity Month perhaps there is a pleasant evening ahead where you could watch some stags in your back paddocks?

Squirrel Gliders are hard to find. They sleep during the day and move quickly, quietly and without brilliant eye shine, when spot-lighting, through our trees at night. It makes finding and counting them challenging. Ecologists have found that one of the ways to monitor Squirrel Gliders is to watch stags.

The stag watching process is relatively simple but there are some criteria for identifying the appropriate stag to watch.

- You need to find an area where Squirrel Gliders would likely be. Around Burrumbuttock this would be most roadsides that have trees with hollows, larger patches of old trees - again with hollows and most importantly locations where there is a connection to other patches like these (are you picking up a pattern here).
- Identify a tree (stag) with multiple hollows and spouts (the dead remnants of a branch) – Squirrel Gliders prefer small openings for a hollow where as a Brushtail Possum likes much roomier accommodation.



This biological legacy on the Lindner's has been enhanced by planting Spotted Gum trees around it. Squirrel Gliders love the flowers of Spotted Gum and would travel through the connected plantings to feed on them and potentially den in this tree during the day. This would be an ideal STAG to watch. Photo: Lou Bull

## ROUND 3 on-ground works

### WRAP UP

As the warmer season takes shape and we all hope the crops and grass grow strongly it is a good opportunity to reflect on the works put into the farms in Round 3 of the LAMP project.

The focus area for 2017/18 was for the landscape adjoining the Burrumbuttock - Howlong Rd. Anyone that has driven this road in the last couple of months will have noticed the white pattern crisscrossing the paddocks and hills plus some roadsides. These are the new connections and corridors that will create a network across the landscape where Squirrel Gliders can move through to feeding sites, breed and extend their home ranges.

Planting conditions were less than ideal as ground preparation and planting were hampered by the dry conditions.



Despite these conditions the planting contractor was able to plant just over 9000 seedlings. Later winter rainfall has been very gratefully received and all going well these seedlings will establish and thrive.



In summary there was 150 Stock Proof Tree Guards Installed, 8.5km of new fencing and approximately 30 ha of revegetation completed (planting and direct seeding).

To stag watch position yourself so that the hollow branch or cavity is silhouetted against the night sky as this will enable a clear profile of the emerging animals, typically 5-10 metres from the tree trunk gives you a comfortable angle to watch.

The time of the day to really focus your watching is right on twilight when all you can see is the silhouette outline of the trees. Kookaburras are often the last day birds to call, heralding the night shift, so stay patient and wait until at least 30 mins after their calls. Set yourself up before twilight to allow time to adjust your eyes and absolutely avoid using torches until you need to leave – this avoids impacting on the animals and encourages your eyes to adjust to the light.

Squirrel Gliders (and Feathertail Gliders) are often the first to emerge followed by larger possums like the brushtails and ringtails. Remember to also listen carefully for sounds such as bark moving, rustling leaves or pellets (poo) being dropped as this could mean an animal has emerged in a nearby tree you're not watching.



The twilight is getting close to silhouetting the stag trees that Squirrel Gliders will begin to emerge from. Photo: Paula Sheehan

The benefit of stag watching is not interfering with animal's natural activities, it is very peaceful, and you see other creatures as well.

It is genuinely heart-warming to watch a little family emerge from a hollow, scamper to the very tippy top of a tree then quietly launch themselves bravely out to wherever they go to feed. At this time of year families of Squirrel Gliders with maturing young will be out foraging on flowers and insects (including the lerps attacking our gum trees) and encouraging the young to find new home ranges.

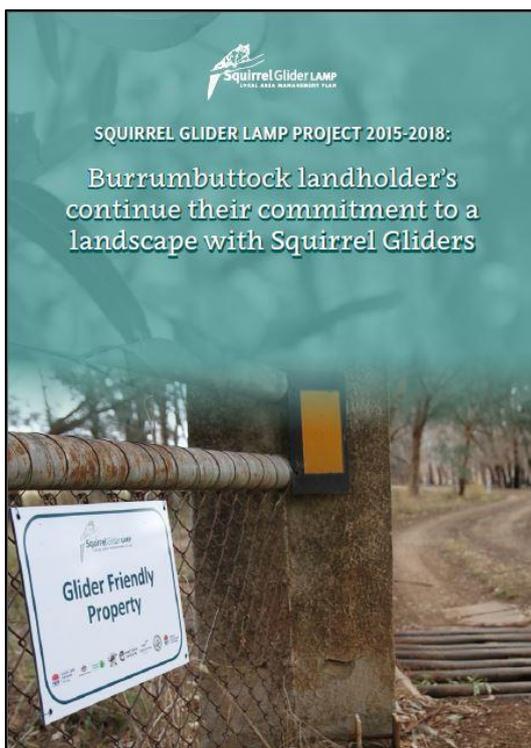
What will you find in a STAG near you? If you find something I would love to hear the details. Call Lou on 0458 240 634

## PLANTING OF SOME ROADSIDES

In this round of the project a few local roadsides were also targeted to plant and create links. Some roadsides are always going to be travelled more regularly by stock, but it can be worth a little gamble to try and achieve some big picture results. Creating links via our roadsides can make a big difference to the ease of future movement of Squirrel Gliders. We aimed for close planting of only tree species with the hope even a few trees establish to strengthen the connections and support the work locals have agreed to on their private properties. If there are any issues on these roads please let Lou know.



## LAUNCH OF LANDHOLDER BOOK



With the opening of the new Sunshine Room at Wirramina also came the launch of the most recent book of landholders involved in the Squirrel Glider LAMP Project.

The initial print run made for the launch has quickly disappeared. A second print run will be made very

soon so landholders involved in the last round of the project can receive their copies.

This book combines all 3 funding rounds since 2016 and provides a great snap shot of the locals involved in this large on ground project.

## THE ILLUSION OF A LANDSCAPE WELL CONNECTED



The many tree lined roadsides in the local area can give us the illusion that the area is well covered with trees and that they are all connected. Certainly, at the ground level this genuinely appears to be the case. It is the advantage of being able to view the landscape from an aerial perspective that helps give a clearer idea of what the reality is.

Squirrel Gliders can glide up to 70m, however to achieve this distance the tree would need to be very tall. We aim for spacings of 20 m between trees to ensure Squirrel Gliders don't have to hit the ground. The basis of the whole LAMP project is connecting and reducing the gaps down to 20 m.

Below provides a great example: the roadside could potentially be linked to maturing areas of trees in the paddock by planting a connection and reducing the gap between the areas. This is particularly important where there are the large old trees with hollows (in this case on the roadside) and connecting new areas of potential foraging and home ranges (the younger plantation in the paddock).



## Upcoming Events

- Henty Field Days Sept 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> visit the Landcare shed for displays and information
- Oct 21<sup>st</sup> **Birds, Brekky & Boxes** – West Hume Landcare are hosting a special event for locals looking at the birds of the local area, a heart-warming brekky and a late morning session on how to build nest boxes. Keep an eye out for more details.

## News

- Funding to maintain the Squirrel Glider LAMP project into the future has being sort via a grant through the Save our Species fund. We will be informed in December whether this will be successful
- Current funding to maintain a project officer for 12 months has been granted via the Murray Catchment Action Plan
- Funding for on-ground works via Environmental Trust will begin very soon following confirmation of grant.

For more upcoming events, head to:

- Murray LLS Events Page  
<http://murray.lls.nsw.gov.au/resource-hub/events>
- West Hume Landcare Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/westhumelandcare>
- Ecoportal

<http://ecoportal.net.au/events/>

- Greater Hume Shire Events Calendar  
<http://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/Events/EventsCalendar/tabid/154/Default.aspx>
- Eventbrite  
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/d/australia-albury/events/?crt=regular&sort=best>

## More information

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Or visit:

- Petaurus Education Group Website  
<http://www.wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/squirrel-glider-lamp/>
- Murray Local Land Services Website  
<http://murray.lls.nsw.gov.au/our-lamp-project>

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