

## Sugar Glider box guidelines

Jean-Pierre Favre

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*The following notes are to help you with the decisions you might have to make if you wish to have some of the nesting boxes on your property.*

### DO I HAVE TO HAVE THESE BOXES ON MY LAND?

Certainly not, and if you feel that you don't want them, please let us know and we will make sure that nothing is done on your property. So far everyone we have contacted about the project has expressed interest in having boxes located on their property. Enough boxes have been made to supply some to other interested people in the area.

### DO I HAVE TO DO ANY WORK?

The minimum requirements from you is that you'll have to plant the trees and shrubs which you'll receive for free. It will be appreciated if you could select the trees where you'd want your boxes located. Bear in mind that tall trees are much better than short ones as the gliders will climb to the very top of a gum tree to launch themselves into other bushes or other trees nearby. Once there, they will usually climb again to the top and glide to another tree, etc. Assume that they glide at an angle of 45 degrees so if you select a tree from which they can move to a distance of at least 50 metres without running on the ground, you have a good set-up.

If your land hasn't got the above to provide gliding movement for these creatures, then we'll put the boxes up and you might have to wait a few years for the trees to grow before gliders come in and settle on your land. From my observation of the area, I think that apart from a couple of blocks near the start of Newington Road, all blocks should have no problems finding a suitable spot for the boxes.

Try to keep at least 100 metres between the boxes.

It is not recommended that you place a box near where dogs spend time or where they might yap a lot.

There's always a good chance that bees might settle in the boxes and to cover that eventuality, we are making a few extra boxes. If bees settle in one of your box, the simplest thing to do is to leave them and install another box nearby. Bearing in mind that the boxes are well sealed all around and the only way in for bees is through the one opening so, it is possible to stop bees getting into the box by sealing the entrance and even destroying the nest if the bees are feral. (I've

no experience or knowledge in that field so it's up to you to decide on what's best to do). Another thing to do is to contact a beekeeper to see if they are interested in moving the colony to a hive but from previous experience, bee keepers are usually not interested as they have sufficient swarms to keep them busy.

The boxes should be located a minimum of 4 metres above ground level with no upper limit to height. As these boxes are quite heavy and difficult to handle from a ladder, we have made provisions to hire a cherry picker for one week.

*If you are in a position to place the box yourself, it will save us time and money.*

#### HOW ARE THE BOXES FIXED TO THE TREE

We are making sets of brackets to fix against the tree trunks and mount the box onto. These brackets are made of steel painted with galvanising paint. A special template will be made to accurately locate the two brackets on the tree trunk to allow for easy placement and securing of the box.

#### SPECIFICATION

Each box is made of an inner core of 18mm thick craftwood. The inside measurements are 200mm x 200mm x 500mm deep.

The craftwood is then sheeted with 25mm of foam insulation and the outer skin of 15mm timber fixed to battens to provide an overall wall thickness of 60mm. The idea there is to emulate the kind of insulation that hollows in old gum trees used to provide. Tree hollows suitable for sugar gliders take well over 100 years to form and most of these trees together with the habitat they formed have been removed from our area. What we're proposing to do is to recreate the kind of conditions that existed before Captain Cook came to Australia.

After making the boxes, temperature tests were made to see how the box behaved thermally in very cold conditions and these tests showed that the boxes should be very cosy in winter. In summer when the condition may be extremely hot, we have noticed with our previously mounted boxes that the gliders may sleep outside of the box on rare occasion.

#### WHICH WAY SHOULD THE BOX BE FACING

Ideally, the box should be located away from the prevailing winds and cold air and if possible in a shady position. In this area this means that the perfect location would be facing north-east but if that is not possible, other orientations can be used as the tunnel entry provides great protection from the westerly winds. Notice that a long overhang has been provided on the entry side in to provide summer shade but if

you box is too exposed to the sun on one of the sides, you might make a shade out of a piece of shade cloth to mount of the side fixed to the metal edge and away from the walls. A short overhang has been made on the tree trunk side as this side should get good protection from the trunk itself.

### THE 'HONEY STICK' APPARATUS

All boxes have been provided with a pulley which will allow you to lift a piece of wood onto which you can paint the occasional bit of honey to keep the gliders in view for a few minutes after they exit the box before dark. Use a piece of polypropylene rope to make the apparatus work.

### PLACING NESTING MATERIAL INTO THE BOXES

Place about 50mm of leaf debris from under a gum tree into the box to provide nesting material. You can push this material through the opening or remove 3 of the 4 roof screws, swing the roof sheet around and unscrew the 2 Phillips head screw that secure the double lid in place. If you want before replacing the metal roof sheet, you may place some insulation material in the gap between the top of the lid and the roof sheet. This will provide another degree of insulation. Material suitable for this can be anything from polystyrene (old fruit boxes are ideal) to fibreglass or even an old jumper!

### SERVICING THE BOXES

I believe that there will be no need to do any maintenance on the boxes for many years. Maybe after say 8 or 10 years, you might check the inside and maybe replace the nesting material but that is most unlikely to be required as the gliders will take care of that themselves. Also if gliders are in the box when you look at them, you can suffer a nasty bite which they can inflict with their very sharp teeth. I once looked at the inside of one of our boxes that had gliders in it for over 2 years and found the inside to be in the same condition as when the box was installed. I guess that they must go to the loo when outside.

### HOW LONG WILL THESE BOXES LAST?

If properly installed, and providing they don't get destroyed in a bushfire or the tree on which they are mounted falls over, they should last for at least 50 years. There is a risk that cockatoos might find the fragrance of the Douglas Fir external lining a bit too good and chew on the facing boards but if this happens, the solution would be to fix a layer of fine chicken wire to the affected part before they are damaged too much. The mounting brackets being made of steel should last as long as the boxes. There is no rusting problem in our area and the

coating of galvanising paint given to the brackets should make them rustproof for many years.

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT CAN BE DONE TO THE BOX?

If you want, you can take the metal roof off, unscrew the double lid and fix some extra climbing facilities on another side of the box. This can be a piece of fly gauze or shade cloth. You can also fix sticks to the sides and front of the box to allow movement around the box.

The roof can be sheeted with pieces of wood that can be glued on with liquid nails glue. This will allow the gliders to also use the roof as a gathering area.

### DEADLY RISKS

Cats are the main risk. Actually the presence of gliders on a block of land is often indicated when the cat brings a dead glider home. Cats can climb on trees and can present a danger so, if this is the case with your boxes you can fit a 1200mm high metal or plastic skirt around the trunk at a height of about 1500 mm to prevent the cat jumping over the sheet. I have made one such device which is fixed onto the tree with the box and you can if you want, come and see how it is done. It is believed too that foxes can climb trees to get at the gliders. I read somewhere that fox droppings have been found on branches 7m up a tree trunk where gliders were nesting.

You can buy enough 1200 wide off-cuts of colourbond sheeting from second hand building material places for less than \$5 per tree trunk. The hard thing is to roll the sheet around the tree trunk and fix it into place. Leave at least 25 mm clearance all around the trunk to allow for growth.

### IS THERE OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SUGAR GLIDERS.

Do a 'sugar gliders' search on the net and you'll find plenty of material and photographs of these creatures.

**You might like to start with these links**

- [Sugar Gliders at Bushy Park Wetlands](#)

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