



**MIDCOAST**  
council

# PROTECTING AND ENHANCING SQUIRREL GLIDER HABITAT



The squirrel glider is listed as threatened in NSW and is classified as being vulnerable to extinction. Recent studies have determined that bushland reserves in central Forster support a significant population of squirrel gliders that is geographically isolated from adjacent populations to the north and south of the town. This urban population of squirrel gliders requires careful management to ensure its survival.

Council were successful in receiving funding assistance from the NSW Government through the NSW Environmental Trust. These funds are being utilised to enhance the habitat of the squirrel glider population across 53 hectares of Council reserves in Forster. This project aims to support local urban biodiversity, specifically the Forster squirrel glider population, with proactive on-ground management of key threats and ongoing community engagement and education.

## Nesting Boxes

One of the key aspects of the project has involved the installation of specially-constructed nesting boxes in areas of the reserves where natural hollows are in short supply. Gliders rely on hollows for shelter and breeding. In total 64 nesting boxes have been placed into trees in Council reserves in the project area. Monitoring of the boxes has shown an excellent uptake rate by squirrel gliders, particularly in the reserves around Golden Ponds and The Southern Parkway.



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## Community Engagement

Engagement of the local community has been designed to raise awareness about the significance of urban habitat (den and movement) trees, backyard biodiversity and other urban bushland values. It delivers key messages around priority threats such as weeds, predation from feral animals and domestic pets, fire and pollution. Council have held a number of community events as part of the project. Two spotlighting walks have been held at The Southern Parkway as well as a successful tree planting day. Over 80 trees and shrubs were planted which will provide important food resources for the squirrel gliders as they mature. Interpretive signage with information about squirrel gliders and their habitat have also been established at various locations within Council reserves.







## Bush Regeneration

Loss and fragmentation of habitat removes mature and old growth trees, depriving the squirrel gliders of important food resources and nesting sites. Invasion by weeds also degrades native fauna habitat by smothering and outcompeting native vegetation that is critical for squirrel gliders and other native animals. These factors also limit the squirrel glider's ability to move across the landscape and makes it more susceptible to predation, particularly by cats and sometimes foxes.

Bush regenerators have been working extensively across the Council reserves to remove environmentally damaging weeds. This work assists in the natural regeneration of native vegetation and improves the quality of foraging and nesting habitat for squirrel gliders. Litter reduction works have also been carried out across the reserves with contractors removing 1.16 tonnes of waste accumulated through dumping and debris from littering.

## Feral Animal Control

Council officers undertake monitoring of feral animals within the Council reserves through visual inspections for signs of fox presence. This involves locating den sites, observing scats and deploying remote cameras. As part of the project, den fumigation methods have been utilised at active den sites.

While fox control is important on a wider scale for native wildlife, feral and domestic cats are however the biggest threat to squirrel gliders. Cats are opportunistic predators and will climb trees to prey on squirrel gliders. It's very important that domestic cats are kept indoors, or confined to cat enclosures.

## How can you help?



Avoid removing native trees, especially those with hollows and retain native shrubs and groundcovers



On farms, control grazing within remnants to encourage regeneration of trees and understorey shrubs (including wattles)



Plant native trees and shrubs to provide food resources for squirrel gliders and other native animals



Connect isolated habitat patches by planting corridors of local native plant species



Desex domestic cats and keep domestic cats indoors or in a cat enclosure



Remove invasive weeds and dispose of garden waste appropriately



Pick up litter



Install nesting boxes



Feral and domestic cats are a serious threat to squirrel gliders