



**MIDCOAST**  
council

# SQUIRREL GLIDERS



Squirrel gliders (*Petaurus norfolcensis*) are a small gliding possum with a membrane of skin that extends from foreleg to hind leg. This membrane allows the animal to make agile, targeted glides of up to 50 metres in flat terrain and even further down a slope.

It is one of five gliding mammals found in the MidCoast Council area. Sadly the squirrel glider is threatened with extinction and is listed as a vulnerable species in NSW.

## What do they look like?

The head and body is about 21cm long and its tail about 27cm long. It is grey above with a darker stripe from the forehead and down the back. The underside can be pale-grey to creamy yellow in colour. Males are larger than females. It weighs on average about 230 grams. The squirrel glider is very similar to the slightly smaller sugar glider; but it has a longer, bushier tail, a longer and pointier face and longer, narrower ears. Squirrel gliders never have a white tip on their tail, which some sugar gliders do have.

## Where do they live?

Squirrel gliders are arboreal (tree-dwelling) mammals that live in eucalypt woodlands, dry forests and swamp forests. Their occurrence at a site depends on adequate foraging habitat and the availability of suitable hollows.

They usually occur in small family groups, comprising of a male, one or two females and their dependent offspring. Nightly foraging ranges are usually up to 300 to 500 metres.

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## What do they eat?

Squirrel gliders are nocturnal which means they feed at night. They emerge from their dens in the evening to forage in tree and understorey canopies and on tree trunks and limbs. They have a varied diet that includes invertebrates such as beetles, spiders, moths and caterpillars as well as pollen, nectar, eucalypt sap and the gum of wattles. Some small vertebrates (mainly eggs and nestlings) may also be eaten on occasion. A reliable winter food source is particularly important, usually flowering swamp mahogany.



## Threats

Clearing and fragmentation of habitat has affected much of the species range through the removal of foraging areas and/or hollow-bearing trees which deprives the squirrel glider of food resources and nesting sites. The species habitats often overlap with favoured coastal development and agricultural lands. Squirrel gliders are also threatened by processes that simplify or modify habitat or reduce its dietary base (over-frequent fire, weeds, under-scrubbing, inappropriate grazing, logging and removal of dead trees). It is predated naturally by goannas, pythons, owls and quolls, but unnaturally by feral and domestic cats and occasionally foxes. Cats are a particularly serious predator and unfortunately account for very high numbers of squirrel glider deaths. Feral pests that competitively exclude gliders from hollows can also be a problem (such as feral honeybees). Squirrel gliders are also occasionally caught on barbed wire fencing.



Hollow-bearing trees provide important habitat for squirrel gliders

## How can I help?



Avoid removing hollow bearing trees and understorey plants.



On farms, control grazing within vegetation 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 cats indoors or in a cat-run, particularly at night



Remove invasive weeds and dispose of garden waste appropriately



Install nesting boxes