

Save gliders' homes

North East Forest Alliance



North East Forest Alliance Briefing Note, March 2026

If we want to save the Greater Glider from extinction, we must first protect their homes.

The Forestry Corporation is legally required to search for and protect 50m (0.8ha) around the dens of threatened gliders, since 2018 including dens of Greater Gliders. For 5 years the EPA turned a blind eye as the Forestry Corporation undertook their searches during the day when the gliders are asleep. As such, no dens were identified by these searches.

Following community complaints, and the finding of a dead Greater Glider, the EPA issued Stop Work Orders over Tallaganda and Flat Rock State Forests on the South Coast, but refused to do so on the North Coast, despite NEFA identifying a number of den trees. There followed a farcical process as the EPA and Forestry Corporation collaborated on three iterations of a Greater Glider Site Specific Biodiversity Condition (SSBC) while avoiding impacts on resources.

In the end they settled on only requiring the Forestry Corporation to undertake nocturnal surveys covering 5-10% of the logging area, while allowing most surveys to be undertaken late at night after the Greater Gliders have left their dens, so the outcome is that most dens are still not identified and protected. As compensation there are requirements for temporary 25m (0.2ha) exclusions around Forestry Corporation sightings (though not those identified by the community) and requirements for retention of additional trees (mostly non-commercial). The nub of the problem is that the EPA are not allowed to implement logging restrictions if they are likely to significantly affect timber commitments.

To save the homes of Greater Gliders, NEFA are requesting that for public lands the NSW Government:

- 1. Apply existing records to identify and map high density Greater Glider habitat to exclude from logging, along with climate refugia and regionally significant corridors**
- 2. Outside high density exclusions, undertake comprehensive pre-logging surveys utilizing thermal drones across the whole logging area**
- 3. Implement 100m logging exclusions around all records of greater gliders, to reasonably encompass their home ranges, multiple dens, and feed trees**

The nationally Endangered Southern Greater Glider is our largest gliding marsupial, able to glide for 75m between trees. During the day it dens in hollows provided by large old eucalypts, mostly over 200 years old, emerging just after dark to spend the night feeding on leaves of select mature eucalypts. It moves between 3-20 den trees in its home ranges of 1-3ha. It has high site fidelity and often dies if its home is destroyed. It is one of 174 NSW species dependent upon the hollows provided by old trees.

In late 2023, community reports of breaches of glider protections in Tallaganda and Flat Rock State Forests on the NSW South Coast led to the EPA instigating Stop Work Orders and requiring the Forestry Corporation to undertake searches for Greater Glider den trees. Meanwhile on the north coast NEFA had undertaken surveys in Newry, Moonpar and Styx River State Forests that had identified a number of Greater Glider den trees, and since July had been requesting the Forestry Corporation to meet its legal obligation to undertake surveys for them. In light of the southern Stop Work Orders NEFA requested the EPA to do the same on the north coast. They refused.

In response South East Forest Rescue and NEFA undertook further surveys in Styx River State Forest, identifying an additional 15 Greater Glider den trees. The legal requirement is for Forestry Corporation to protect 50m around all den tree records (including ours). However they ignored these records, and logged and roaded within the buffers of nine of these den trees, apparently logging two of them. The EPA are currently investigating. Based on past performance it will take years before there is an outcome.

In early February 2024 the EPA and Forestry Corporation collaborated on their first version of a Species Specific Biodiversity Condition (SSBC) for Greater Gliders, which attempted to remove the need for surveys to identify den trees, instead requiring the retention of 'Greater Glider Trees', which could be met by mostly unmerchantable trees, and in some areas meant no additional tree retention at all. Conservation groups complained that the survey requirement could only be removed by the Ministers after public consultation. They then quickly did a second version on 16 February that required nocturnal surveys covering 5-10% of the logging area. Each survey required multiple spotlighting transects, with all transects in a survey to be commenced within an hour after sunset (when gliders are most likely to be seen leaving their dens).

In May conservation groups submitted to the EPA a detailed review of the Forestry Corporation's 240 Greater Glider transects up until that time, showing 78% of transects were commenced later than an hour after sunset and continued late into the night, and were thus illegal (as confirmed by our lawyers). As expected, no den trees were found in the late night transects as the Greater Gliders had already left their dens.

A review of freedom of information (GI(PA)) documents found that the EPA and Forestry Corporation were aware that dens would not be identified in transects more than two hours after sunset, never-the-less claim they intended survey transects for dens could be undertaken late into the night. The wording of the SSBC did not reflect this intent, a problem identified by Forestry Corporation staff who resolved to proceed with transects late into the night anyway, stating *“So, it doesn’t say what it should say. We will have to roll with starting each evening’s efforts within an hour of sunset. Lets hope it doesn’t come back to bite us”*. It is perplexing as to why an amendment was not made then.

NEFA then began preparing a legal challenge to the illegal surveys, which led to the Forestry Corporation complaining to EPA *“Forestry Corporation now finds itself in a situation where third parties are seeking to bring proceedings in response to this error”*, asking the EPA to retrospectively deem the late night transects as valid, which they refused to do.

The EPA issued a third SSBC on 26 May that codified the allowance for survey transects to be undertaken late into the night, and to provide some justification for the late surveys they also required 25m (0.2ha) exclusions to be placed around Greater Glider sightings, but only those seen by the Forestry Corporation. Because the EPA did not provide retrospective approval for the illegal surveys, the Forestry Corporation instructed staff to *“contact every harvesting contract crew that is operating in an area surveyed under the previous SSBC (dated 16 February 2024) and immediately cease all harvesting operations”*. Fifteen logging operations were shut down for three weeks. It did come back to bite them. Undaunted they then resumed logging in these areas without undertaking compliant surveys.

The Forestry Corporation continue to survey their 5-10% of the logging area late into the night, well after Greater Gliders have left their dens. As a consequence they find few den trees. Conservation groups have focused on undertaking surveys in proposed and current logging areas. Though unlike the Forestry Corporation, they focus on looking for den trees within an hour after dark. At other times identifying where gliders are, and likely den trees, to focus on after dark. The targeted approach by conservation groups has so far resulted in the identification of 1,288 den trees, while for the same areas the Forestry Corporation have recorded just 50 den trees.

Comparison of records of Greater Glider den trees made by Forestry Corporation pre-logging surveys and conservation groups (up to March 2026).

State Forest	Forestry Corporation	Conservation Groups
Brother	4	145
Bulga	4	53
Carri	2	36
Enfield	2	273
Ewingar	3	30
Flat Rock	0	5
Glenbog	4	123
Hyland	3	10
Riamukka	2	5
Styx River	9	408
Tallaganda	8	59
Tuggolo	9	141
TOTALS	50	1288

While conservation groups results are impressive compared to the Forestry Corporation’s, the problem is that we are only able to survey parts of some logging areas and identify a few of the dens that Greater Gliders need for their survival, and our sighting records require no protection. If Greater Gliders are to survive we need to protect all their remaining strongholds, as well as at least 100m around each sighting to have a reasonable chance of encompassing most of the multiple den and feed trees they need within their home ranges.

The nub of the problem is that the EPA is not allowed to implement any additional restrictions on logging if they are likely to have a significant impact on timber volumes. If Greater Gliders are to be provided with the protection they need then the Government needs to change the rules to prioritise threatened species and reduce timber commitments.