

# Reporting detections of Southern Greater Gliders

Information to help the community report detections of Southern Greater Glider populations to the Conservation Regulator

## What is the purpose of this guidance note?

This guidance note provides advice to the community about how to record Southern Greater Glider sightings and report them to the Conservation Regulator. Reports that comply with minimum standards can be used to inform the application of timber harvesting protections (also called 'prescriptions' or 'management actions').

The guidance note also provides clarity on how Greater Glider protections are applied across the state based on confirmed sightings.



## About the Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*)

The Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*) (Greater Glider), the largest of Australia's gliding possums, is an iconic species that lives in a variety of Eucalypt-dominated forests in Eastern Australia.

Populations have undergone significant decline in recent decades, and this species is listed as 'threatened' under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Victoria) and 'vulnerable' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth).

The precise reasons for the species' rapid decline are unknown and appear to vary between regions. Contributing factors may include habitat loss and fragmentation, bushfire, planned burning, timber harvesting, hyper-predation by owls, extreme heat events, climate change impacts and drought.

## What protections currently exist for Greater Gliders and what is the role of the Conservation Regulator?

*Two key protections currently apply to Greater Gliders in relation to timber harvesting in Victoria*

### Code of Practice protection (East Gippsland FMA)

Under the *Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 (Amended 2021)* (the Code), there is a detection-based prescription for the protection of Greater Gliders. This applies within the East Gippsland Forest Management Area (FMA), when there are verified reports of:

- more than two individuals per hectare; or
- more than 10 individuals per kilometre; or
- more than 15 individuals per hour of spotlighting; or
- substantial populations located in isolated or unusual habitat (as per Tables 13 and 14 “Rare or threatened fauna/flora prescriptions” within the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria’s State forests 2021*)

Verified reports require the creation of a Special Protection Zone (SPZ) of approximately 100 hectares of suitable habitat, which can be combined with existing protection zones, parks or reserves.

### Action Statement protection (statewide)

In November 2019, the Victorian Government released the Greater Glider Action Statement (Action Statement). The Action Statement sets out a range of management actions to help ensure that the species survives and flourishes in Victoria’s native forests. It includes a state-wide prescription for protecting Greater Gliders from impacts of timber harvesting (Intended Management Action 5). This prescription states that if “a density of Greater Gliders equal to or greater than five individuals per spotlight kilometre (or equivalent measure) is identified”, then retention of “at least 40% of the basal area of eucalypts across each timber harvesting coupe, prioritising live, hollow bearing trees” is required.

The Code of Practice protection (East Gippsland FMA) and Action Statement protection (state-wide) prescriptions both currently apply. While Intended Management Action 5 states that it replaces the existing prescription in the Code, the Code prescription, by law, will apply until such a time that the Code is reviewed and amended accordingly. VicForests has committed to implementing both prescriptions until relevant amendments are made.

### The role of the Conservation Regulator in protecting Greater Gliders

Commercial timber harvesting and associated activities undertaken in Victoria’s State Forests are regulated by the Conservation Regulator to maximise compliance with relevant law. This includes laws to ensure that impacts from timber harvesting operations on iconic species such as the Greater Glider are minimised.

While the Action Statement prescription is not yet formally part of the regulatory framework (in law), the Conservation Regulator will monitor and report on compliance with these measures across Victoria until Code amendments are made.

The Conservation Regulator welcomes and encourages community reports of Greater Glider detections. Verified detections may trigger the application of the Code or Action Statement prescriptions. Some of this information is submitted by the public through the Forest Reports process. When the Conservation Regulator receives a Forest Report where a prescription might apply, VicForests is notified and implements the required management actions until the detection can be verified.

The Conservation Regulator also conducts surveys as part of its Forest Protection Survey Program (FPSP). The FPSP was designed by a team of experts, botanists and fauna specialists, and aims to survey at least 80% of coupes planned for harvest each year. The data gathered from these survey programs builds a better understanding of the habitats and location of many threatened species, informs the application of protection measures, and helps provide a clear guide for the timber industry for pre-harvest planning. For more information about the FPSP, see: Forest Protection Survey Program | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au).

## How to conduct surveys and report Greater Glider detections to the Conservation Regulator

*Minimum requirements for surveys to allow detections to be verified and to support the application of protections.*

### Why is there a minimum requirement?

Community surveying and reports are welcomed and encouraged. The public can submit survey information as a 'Forest Report' to the Conservation Regulator, by following the instructions on [how to submit a forest report | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#). When submitting a report, it is important that persons undertaking survey works have an understanding of the survey requirements and Spotlighting methods to ensure that Forest Reports contain the minimum information requirements.

In order for the legal protections to be applied, surveying needs to be conducted at a standard that achieves high quality results, and reports submitted of survey results need to be in a consistent format with minimum information requirements met. If a Forest Report is submitted with insufficient information, reports may be considered incomplete or unsubstantiated and therefore may be unable to be used to inform protections.

### Supporting documents and guidance

To ensure the validity and integrity of data submitted via Forest Reports, the survey requirements outlined in the following documents should be used in conjunction with this Guidance Note:

- the [Forest Reports website \(see 'Submit a report'\)](#); and
- the [Forest Protection Survey Program's Survey Guideline – Spotlighting and Call Playback \(see 'Spotlighting for Arboreal Mammals'\)](#).

Examples of the requirements are listed below this is not a complete summary and the documents listed above should be referenced for more complete guidance.

### Survey methodology

Spotlighting surveys should use a transect-based methodology, and should be undertaken by two observers moving on foot (at an average pace of 10 minutes per 100 metres) and cover a total distance of as close to one kilometre as possible per transect.

Using two observers increases the accuracy of the survey, while moving at a steady pace reduces the chance of observers unduly influencing each other.

Transects are a standardised survey method that is necessary to meet the prescription requirements. The method maximises the detectability of greater gliders if they are present, while minimising the chance of duplicating detections. For further information on the transect methodology please review the supporting documents Survey Guideline – Spotlighting and Call Playback (see 'Spotlighting for Arboreal Mammals') and the Forest Reports website.

***All persons undertaking surveys must abide by declared Timber Harvesting Safety Zones (THSZs) under the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004, which states that unauthorised access to such zones is prohibited.***

### Transect rules for Code prescriptions (East Gippsland only)

*Note that the following transect rules apply to **both Code and Action Statement prescriptions**, because these rules are general in nature. For surveys intended to trigger Action Statement protections, these rules AND the additional rules described below must be applied.*

- transects should avoid unnecessary bends to reduce the risks of double counts;
- if a single transect line (one kilometre) is not possible, alternative arrangements can be made, such as multiple transects that add up to one kilometre within and adjacent to the coupe; and

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- if surveying occurs across multiple transects that add up to one kilometre, they should be spaced a minimum distance of 150 metres apart (to avoid double counts) and a maximum distance of 250 metres apart.
- Examples of acceptable arrangements of transects are provided in Figure 1 below.

## Transect rules for Action Statement protections (Statewide)

When conducting surveys intended to trigger Action Statement protections, the same general rules apply (re-stated below), however there are additional requirements which must also be met.

- transects should avoid unnecessary bends to reduce the risks of double counts;
- if a single transect line (one kilometre) is not possible, alternative arrangements can be made, such as multiple transects that add up to one kilometre within and adjacent to the coupe; and
- if surveying occurs across multiple transects that add up to one kilometre, they should be spaced a minimum distance of 150 metres apart (to avoid double counts) and a maximum distance of 250 metres apart.
- Examples of acceptable arrangements of transects are provided in Figure 1 below.

*The following transect rules (which relate to coupe boundaries) **only apply to the Action Statement prescription.** This is because the Action Statement produces protection areas within a specific coupe. This is different from the Code prescription, which applies broader protections to suitable habitat in the general vicinity of verified records.*

- where possible, the entire transect should be located within the gross coupe boundary (the boundary of the whole coupe, Transects should not consider the forest management zone(s) within, or adjacent to, the coupe.
- however, transect start or end points may be up to 100 metres (in total) outside the gross coupe boundary;
- transects may also be located outside the coupe if they run parallel to the gross coupe boundary and are within 25 metres of the boundary; and
- a single transect that runs parallel to the boundary of two adjacent coupes for one kilometre and is within 25 metres of the boundary of both coupes may be used to trigger prescriptions for both coupes.

## Recording detections

Detections of individual Greater Gliders must be recorded as part of a survey conducted during a single night, in order for the Conservation Regulator to assess detections against the relevant prescription triggers. Individuals cannot be tallied across several nights of surveying, or along the same transect in a single night (this is to avoid double counting).

***Threatened species reports can be most efficiently verified where clear photographs or video footage of a threatened species are able to be linked to a known location recorded by a GPS device.***

## Submitting transect data

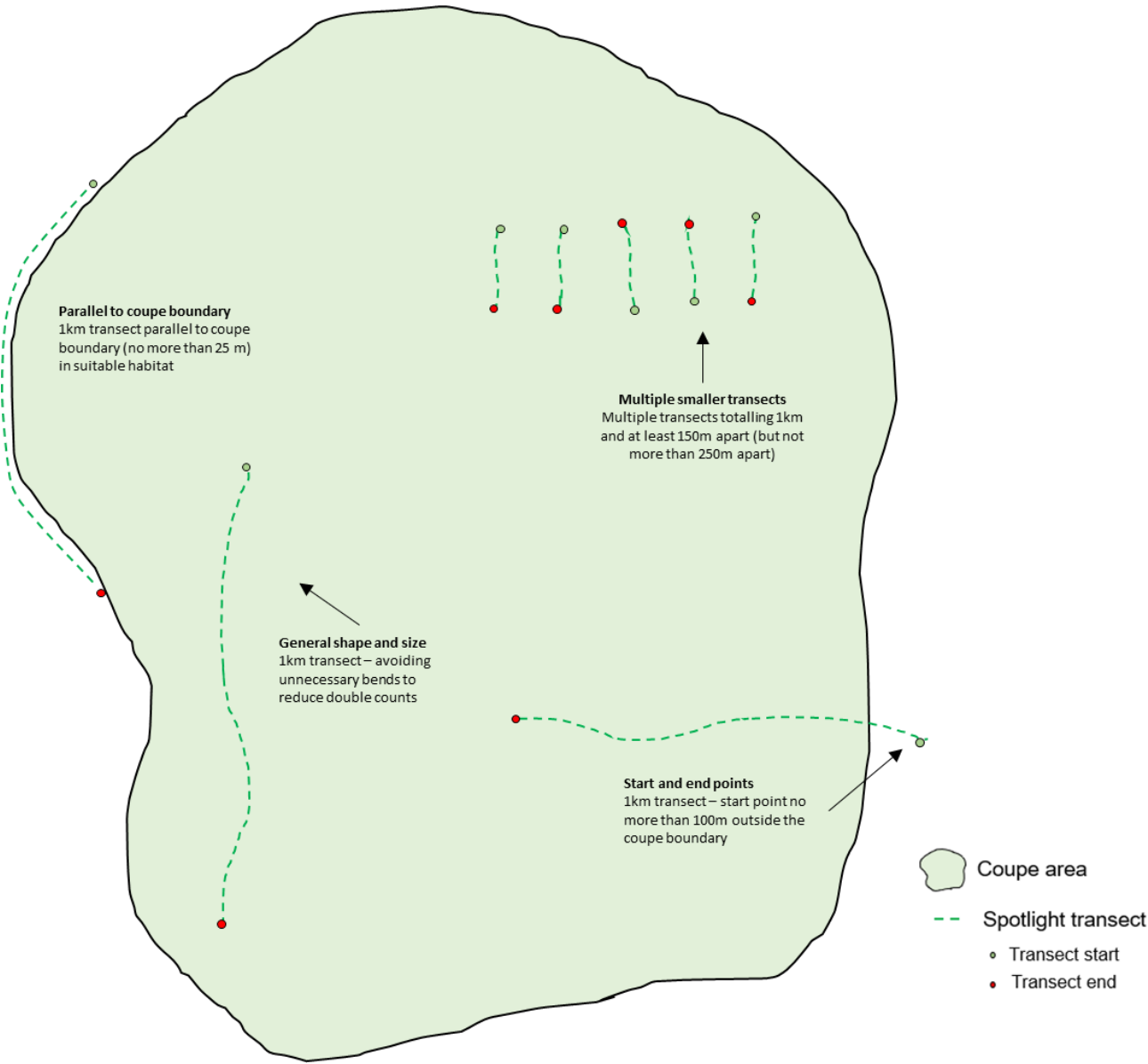
Transect Data is required in conjunction with other minimum information requirements. See the [Forest Reports website 'Submit a report'](#)

Transect data (information about the track walked while surveying), is best submitted in a spatial format (.gpx rather than .pdf) to allow for further data analysis if required. This reduces the need for requests for further information from report sources.

Transect data should be submitted as a single track for each night of surveying. There is no requirement to submit individual tracklogs of each observer for every night of spotlighting.

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Figure 1. Examples of acceptable arrangement of transects.





## How does the Conservation Regulator assess a submitted report?

### Does the report meet the minimum requirements?

After receiving a report, the Conservation Regulator will first confirm that the survey which produced the detection was carried out in accordance with the survey methodology referred to in this guidance note.

If this is not the case, the Conservation Regulator may contact the submitter to request further information, or the Forest Report may be unable to be used to inform protections.

### Assessment to determine whether protections must be applied

If the report meets the minimum requirements, the Conservation Regulator will assess the information to determine if a relevant detection threshold has been met, and if so, what protections should apply.



### Thresholds to trigger a protection:

The Conservation Regulator considers a prescription to be triggered for a coupe where:

- a relevant detection threshold is met:
  - Code of Practice (East Gippsland FMA): more than two individuals per hectare, more than 10 individuals per kilometre, more than 15 individuals per hour of spotlighting, or substantial populations are located in isolated or unusual habitat; and/or
  - Action Statement (state-wide): five or more unique Greater Gliders are found per spotlight kilometre.

### Factors that will not be taken into consideration when assessing whether protections are required:

Provided the reported sightings have followed the survey standards referred to in this Guidance Note, the following factors are not relevant to whether or not a prescription is triggered:

- the distribution of Greater Gliders within a transect.
- the position of Greater Gliders within or close to the gross coupe boundary.

### Implementation of protections

If the Conservation Regulator assesses that the survey methodology has been applied appropriately, and that a detection threshold has been met:

- Code of Practice (East Gippsland FMA): the Conservation Regulator undertakes further field verification (during the confirmation process, appropriate management actions will be implemented in the vicinity of the detections as an interim protection). If detections are confirmed, the process to make a Forest Management Zone (FMZ) amendment is initiated. Once approved, an appropriate SPZ is applied, based on the results of field verification.
- Action Statement (state-wide): the Conservation Regulator formally engages with VicForests with the expectation that at least 40% of the pre-harvest gross coupe basal area ( $m^2/ha$ ) will be retained.

### Information sharing

Detections contained within all Forest Reports are forwarded to VicForests for consideration in planning and operations. This occurs regardless of whether surveys meet the minimum standards (although non-compliant data will not be used to inform formal prescriptions). This allows VicForests to voluntarily implement a higher level of protection.

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## Confidentiality and information privacy

The Conservation Regulator is committed to protecting personal information provided by you in accordance with the principles of the Victorian privacy laws. The Conservation Regulator applies and is bound by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) Information Privacy Policy. The Policy can be accessed at [www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy).

The information provided by you will be used to inform the application of timber harvesting protections.

. When the outcomes of the Conservation Regulator's assessment are communicated to VicForests or other external stakeholders, no information will be provided containing the identity of any group or individual involved in the collection or provision of survey information to us.

However, there may be occasions, such as when compelled by a court ruling or subpoena, or when requested by another enforcement agency, when such information may need to be provided.

You may access the information you have provided to the Conservation Regulator by contacting [forest.reports@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:forest.reports@delwp.vic.gov.au).

## More information

For more information on submitting information to the Conservation Regulator about Greater Gliders, please contact us via email ([forest.reports@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:forest.reports@delwp.vic.gov.au)).

## Photo credit

Pages 1 & 5 – Stephen Smith, DELWP

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