



Phascogale and Inland Sugar Glider Nestbox Program Greater Bendigo National & Regional Parks Mandurang



July 2026 Update

This program incorporates nestbox corridors across Greater Bendigo National Park (GBNP), Greater Bendigo Regional Park (GBRP), Sheepwash Creek (SWC), and Coliban Water's Spring Gully Reserve. Its aim is to strengthen connectivity between pre 2015 nestboxes (NB) and expand corridors.

The corridors fall within an approximate 70 sq km polygon that forms a loop around Mandurang and Mandurang South and follows tracks of a total 41 km in length (fig1).

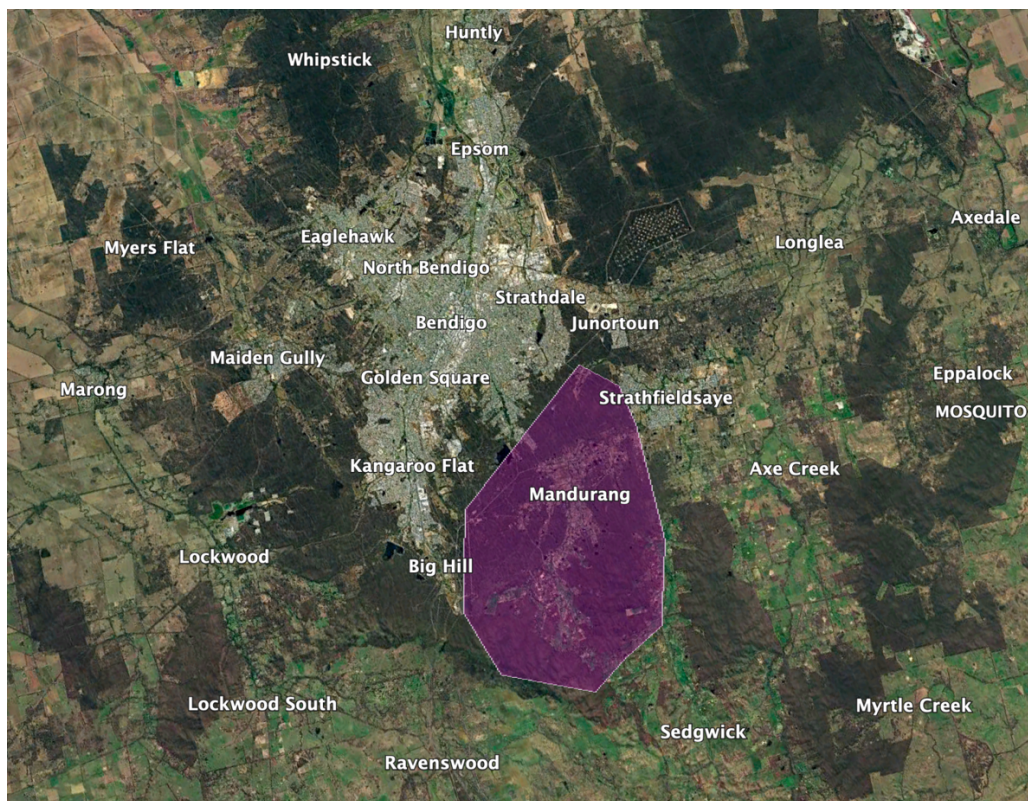


Fig1 Total Nestbox corridor in relation to Bendigo city and surrounding forests

At last count in 2021 there were 620 nestboxes that had been installed or upgraded over the period of 2018-2021. Of these, 100 were located in Spring Gully Reservoir Reserve and managed by Coliban Water, while 17 along Sheepwash Creek were managed by former Sheepwash Creek Landcare members. The remaining 503 are in Greater Bendigo National and Regional Parks and managed by past & present Bendigo Field Naturalist Club members.

Maintenance Check 2026

Maintenance checks are part of our nestbox management responsibilities. Throughout June /July 2026 club members Viv Dell, Kerrie Norris and Karen Thomas began a maintenance stocktake of boxes.

One Tree Hill Corridor July 2026

As of date we have completed the One Tree Hill (OTH) corridor (fig 2) and will continue to work through the remainder. The OTH corridor connects boxes in the Spring Gully Reservoir Reserve to those in the Mandurang section of GBNP south of Tannery Lane. It extends from Guys Hill Rd to Mandurang Rd.

Boxes in this corridor were installed or upgraded 8 years ago. A section near Pioneer Rd is monitored by the Year 12 Environmental Science students from Victory College as part of their studies, led by their teacher Mrs Ro Rimmer.

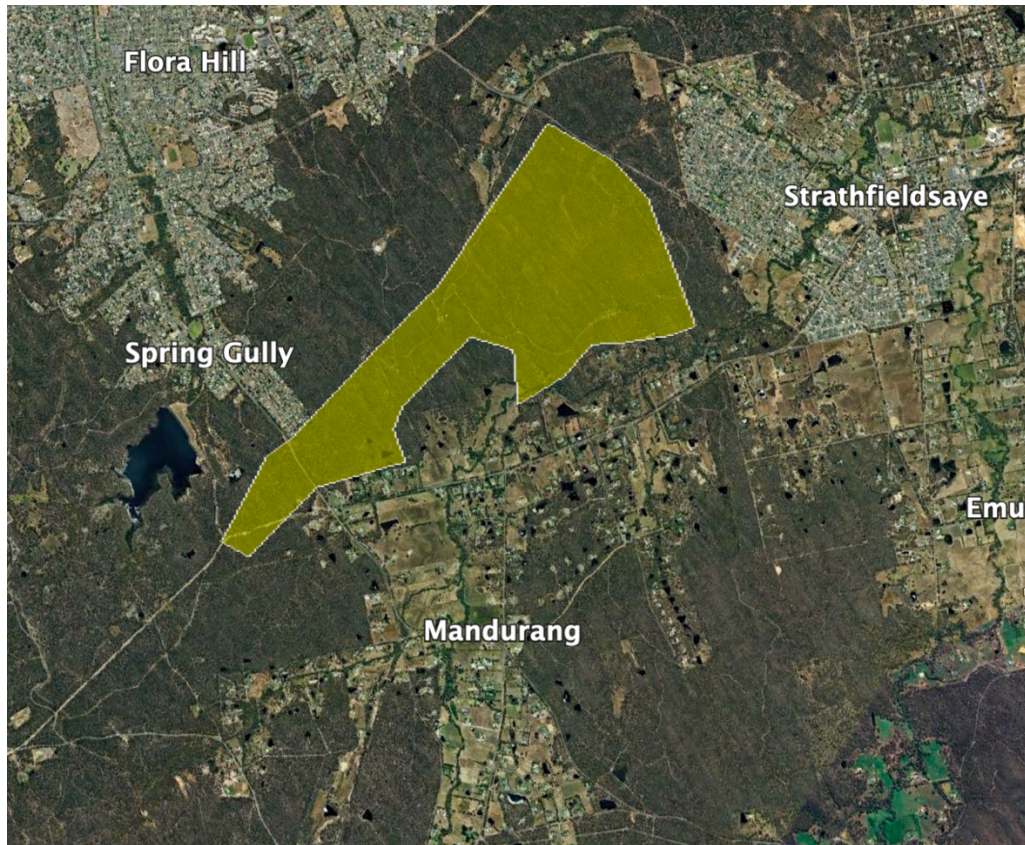


Fig2 One Tree Hill Corridor polygon

At the time of inspection there were 111 boxes of which 107 were inspected. All boxes had been used by phascogales and/or gliders.

Phascogales had used 75 boxes(70%), and gliders had used 27. Two bee infestations were found in boxes with the original larger internal volumes (>10 litres). One box had been chewed out and was no longer suitable for target species. Ten boxes had to be removed for repair. These were replaced with new boxes.



Fig 3a Typical functioning phascogale nest



Fig 3b Typical functioning glider nest built on top of a phascogale nest

Glider nests (fig 3b) are beautifully constructed bowls of eucalypt leaves in which the family nestles. They do not leave scats in the den, and the nests generally remain neat and in form.

Phascogale nests (fig 3a) when first built are constructed mostly of bark, feathers and fur. It is the female that builds the nest in preparation for when her hairless, jellybean size babies are released from her teats. The construction is not obvious at first glance. Freshly built nests have an obvious tunnel leading down to a chamber (first size) lined with feathers and finer material. They deposit their scats outside the chamber on top of nest in one corner. Male phascogales only live 6 -7months as adults and are happy to use any safe available cavity.

Over time with up to 8 full size young and mum inhabiting the nest, it can become very messy and smelly. If the nest holds its form with some freshening up by the new mother it can be reused in the following year. However with time the scat build up and decomposing nest material compacts, rendering it too solid with little room to use as a maternal nest (fig 4a). In the OTH corridor there were 56 boxes no longer functional as a maternal nest and in need of cleaning out. Most of these boxes were well overdue cleaning having not been cleaned for up to average of 7 year.



Fig 4a Phascogale nest in need of cleaning out



Fig 4b adding the old top layer

Our cleaning procedure is to remove the compacted material, add some short lengths of raw lamb's wool donated by club member Alister White (thank you) to the bottom and return the fresh material (if any in old nest) to the top (fig 4b).

Management Implications

This check highlights the importance of regular nestbox cleaning in our program. After seven years, only 54% of boxes were serving as functional spaces for maternal nests and of these boxes 81% were occupied at the time of inspection.

- Of the 27 functioning glider nestboxes, 24 contained glider families.
- Of the 21 functional phascogale nests, 15 most likely contained a phascogale, although a few may have been gliders. We did not disturb the phascogale nests to confirm the species. Animals in glider nests are easier to identify, whereas in phascogale nests in winter they can be tucked deep within the nest material.

As we check the more recently installed corridors, we expect a higher proportion of boxes to remain functional.

It is clear that the cost-effectiveness of the nestbox program is reduced when boxes are checked infrequently, or not at all.

For further information or involvement contact Karen as in footnote,