

Feeding perch/ possible roost and rich mammal site in forest in Bonang

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Introduction

I would like to report on three fauna observations that occurred in two scheduled coups, 891 516 28 and 891 516 0037 in Bonang, East Gippsland. The observations involve a high density of yellow-bellied glider *Petaurus australis* and a Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* feeding perch/ possible roost (GPS – GDA 94, UTM UPS, 0653089 5880819). One observation led to the other so I will report chronologically. The feeding perch/ possible roost may have been made by another large forest owl however a Powerful Owl was heard in the vicinity and there was a large glider's hand amongst the white wash.

There was evidence collected at the roost site however I do not believe evidence can be collected for the yellow-bellied gliders (YBG) except 5 witnesses who were the observers there at the time. If YBG presence needs verification I would like to emphasise the survey effort that was used to count individuals. Something that falls short of this would not guarantee the capacity to catch individual calls consecutively and hence count the number of individuals.

Survey 1

Location: The south side of Rising Sun Road in the forest behind the private all within scheduled coup number 891 516 28.

Time: dusk, 1820 - 1930, 25/8/12

Weather: cold and windy

Aim: A landholder had previously reported to a friend of hearing a high number of YBG in the area. Our aim was listen for YBG calls and count individuals.

Method: Five people positioned themselves in the scheduled coup. Four were positioned 100-150 metres in the forest at the extreme corners and the fifth person was positioned in the centre of the scheduled forest area with the call back device (figure 1.1).

A listening period of approximately 10 minutes commenced at dusk followed by an owl playback at 1830 - 1842 of owls from the Genus *Tyto* as well as the Barking Owl *Ninox connivens*. These calls have appeared to encourage vocalisations by YBG in past surveys I have conducted hence why they were used. Powerful Owls (PO) were not played because of the time of year correlating to a known nesting season. A listening time then took place, the centre person left at 1852, the Northeast corner left at 1905, the west corner left at 1915 and the remainder at 1930.

Result: The centre person (myself), heard the call of an owllet nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus* only, I did however hear movement from ground mammals and observed both Potoroo and Bandicoot

diggings. Both the observers in the most southern corners heard YBG coming from the gully close to them at 1930 and stated the number as ≥ 2 . The most westerly and most northerly observers heard a PO call just after dusk. They recorded the calls from the NNE and W in the direction of a gully on the North side of Rising Sun Road.

Survey 2

Location: Forest on the north side of Rising Sun Road surrounded by private land to the east and west. Most of the forested area is encompassed in the scheduled coup 891 516 0037.

Time: 1030-1400, 5/9/12.

Weather: Warm, very windy.

Aim: To look for whitewash and large hollows especially near gullies.

Method: Five people spread out throughout the forest looking for owl sign walking from south to north stopping just at the north side of the larger northerly gully.

Result: Scattered white wash splatter was found on the south side of the southern gully very close to Rising Sun Road (GPS – GDA 94, UTM UPS, 0653089 5880819). This was quite close to where the PO call was detected in survey 1. Photos were taken of the whitewash and are attached in appendix 1. A large glider hand was found in a broken down pellet and collected (which I have in my possession). The whitewash was found under an *Acacia delbata* with a number of tall hollow bearing trees surrounding it.

Other large hollow bearing trees were also located on the gully slopes across the forested area and in the middle of the coup. Two YBG feed trees were also detected, one, within a few metres of the owl perch/ possible roost and one in the northerly gully (no GPS coordinate taken).

Survey 3

Location: As for survey 2 however, people were stationed in a fixed position (orange squares in figure 1.1). Two people each were at the north and middle (orange squares) and one person (myself) near the perch/ possible roost on Rising Sun Road.

Time: Dusk to 45 minutes after dusk, 10/9/12.

Weather: Slightly cold, light breeze but generally still.

Aim: To sit near hollow bearing trees and listen at dusk for PO conversation or chicks.

Method: From trees located on the previous survey 3 groups were stationed near large hollows to listen for PO (figure 1.1). I was near the 'roost' tree, two other observers were near a large tree west of the rubbish tip and the remaining two were on the edge of the northerly gully. All groups sat and listened for 45 minutes from dusk.

Result: No PO were heard however ≥ 6 YBG were heard. I heard two different YBG calls consecutively to the west of the gully I was at and one to the east. The other 4 observers also heard YBG coming from the northern gully, which were obviously different individuals as we heard them at

a similar time. As the Northern observers may have heard the same gliders I have only reported the calls heard by the two observers near the northern gully. These observers heard ≥ 3 YBG calls consecutively in and around the gully they were stationed at. This result is very close to 0.2 YBG /ha which is a conservation guideline for a rich mammal site in the East Gippsland Forest Management Plan (2002). It should also be noted that surveying of YBG with people posted in different areas at the same time and recording direction is a reliable way to count individuals. It should therefore be considered by those verifying this result that with only one or two observers in one location YBG surveys are bias towards lower numbers /ha.

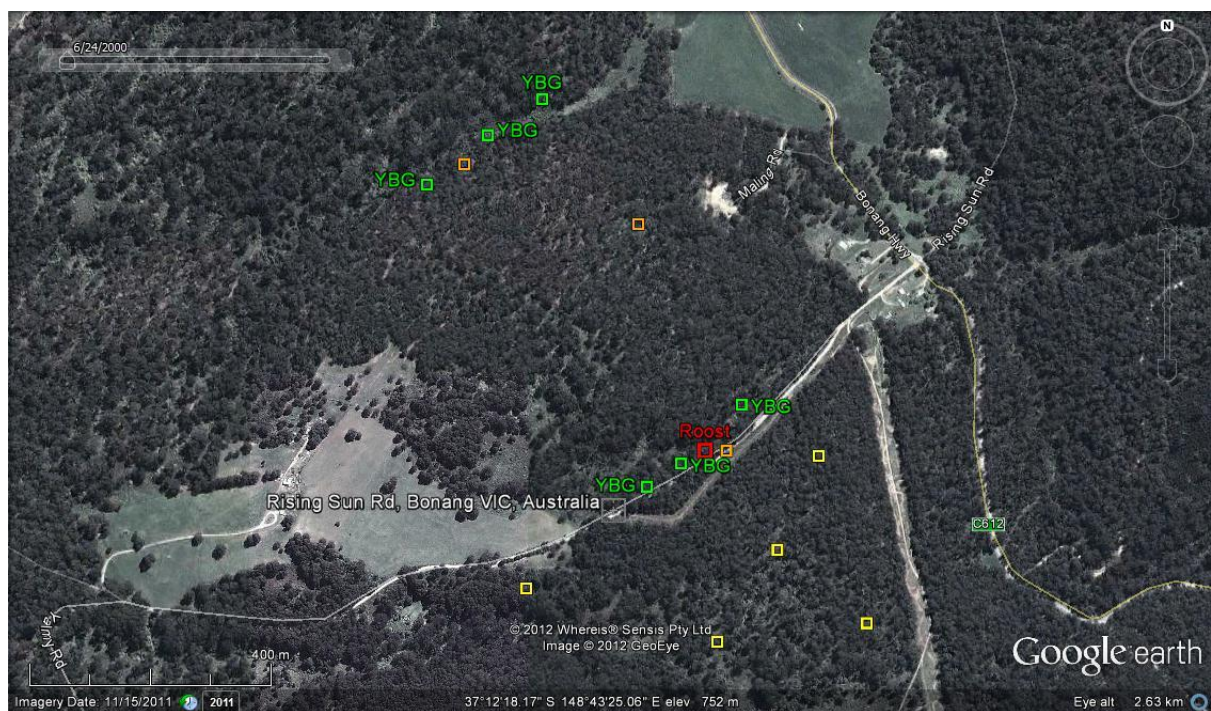


Figure 1.1 shows the location in which the surveys took place in the Bonang forest in August/September 2012. Yellow squares are the positions of the 5 observers on the 25/8/12, survey 1. The three light orange squares are the locations of the 5 observers on the 10/9/12, survey 3. The green squares are the approximate locations of individual yellow-bellied gliders heard in survey 3. The red square was where whitewash was found on the ground in survey 2, 5/9/12 this was located by triangulating a powerful owl call heard in survey 1.

Reference

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1995. *Forest Management Plan, East Gippsland Forest Management Area*.

Appendix 1

Photos of white wash and glider hand.



