2006

**Annotated Possum and Glider records from the Queensland Naturalist**

Kevin Maloney  
*University of Wollongong*

Jamie Harris  
*Southern Cross University*

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/scipapers

Part of the Life Sciences Commons, Physical Sciences and Mathematics Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

**Recommended Citation**

Maloney, Kevin and Harris, Jamie: Annotated Possum and Glider records from the Queensland Naturalist 2006, 84-93.  
https://ro.uow.edu.au/scipapers/4843

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
Valuable observations on the occurrence of species are often recorded and published by naturalists. *The Queensland Naturalist* is an important source of historic records on the distribution of many species. In this report, we survey past volumes of this journal records of possum and glider species, and also provide the latest sources of information on the distribution of possums and gliders in Queensland (Qld).

**Disciplines**
Life Sciences | Physical Sciences and Mathematics | Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Publication Details**
ANOTATED POSSUM AND GLIDER RECORDS FROM THE QUEENSLAND NATURALIST

K. Shane Maloney¹ and Jamie M. Harris²

¹ Department of Biological Sciences, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522 (ksm99@uow.edu.au);
²School of Environmental Science and Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW 2480 (jharri11@scu.edu.au).

Introduction

Valuable observations on the occurrence of species are often recorded and published by naturalists. *The Queensland Naturalist* is an important source of historic records on the distribution of many species. In this report, we survey past volumes of this journal for records of possum and glider species, and also provide the latest sources of information on the distribution of possums and gliders in Queensland (Qld).

Methods

All volumes of *The Queensland Naturalist* were searched for possum and glider records i.e. Volume 1 (1908) to Volume 43 (2005). For each species, the records were tabulated and a short annotated account was assembled.

Results

Possum and glider records from *The Queensland Naturalist* were found in 44 articles. These pertained to 14 of the 19 species that occur in Qld (Table 1). The five absent species were Long-tailed Pygmy-possum *Cercartetus caudatus*, Mahogany Glider *Petaurus gracilis*, Daintree River Ringtail Possum *Pseudochirulus cinereus*, Striped Possum *Dactylopsila trivirgata*, and Rock Ringtail Possum *Petropseudes dahli*.
Table 1: Number of papers (n) with records of possum and gliders in *The Queensland Naturalist*. Common names used follow Strahan (1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possum / Glider species</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Pygmy-possum <em>Cercartetus nanus</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-bellied Glider <em>Petaurus australis</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Glider <em>Petaurus breviceps</em></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2, 11, 15, 16, 21-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squirrel Glider <em>Petaurus norfolcensis</em></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1, 4, 7, 12, 14, 15, 17, 26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemuroid Ringtail Possum <em>Hemibelideus lemuroides</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Glider <em>Petauroides volans</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 15, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Ringtail Possum <em>Pseudechirops archeri</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daintree River Ringtail Possum <em>Pseudochirulus herbertensis</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Ringtail Possum <em>Pseudechiirus peregrinus</em></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1-3, 6, 8-10, 15, 18, 25, 31-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feathertail Glider <em>Acrobates pygmaeus</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1, 2, 7, 13, 25, 30, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Spotted Cuscus <em>Spilocuscus maculatus</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3, 16, 40, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Common Cuscus <em>Phalanger intercastellanus</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Brushtail Possum <em>Trichosurus caninus</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1, 3, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Brushtail Possum <em>Trichosurus vulpecula</em></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2, 5-8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, 42-44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 1 Young (1937); 2 Jack (1941); 3 Vernon (1960); 4 Anon (1969); 5 Kutt and Skull (1995); 6 Woodall (1991); 7 Hines and McDonald (2003); 8 Leggett (2004); 9 Longman (1931); 10 McKenzie (1969); 11 Woodall (1986); 12 Schulz (1997a); 13 Longman (1920); 14 Lavery and Pollitt (1990); 15 Pavey et al. (1994); 16 Shaw (1996); 17 Brearley et al. (2005); 18 Bristow (1962); 19 Marks and Cribb (1966); 20 Anon (1993a); 21 Anon (1956a); 22 McKenzie (1976); 23 Anon (1982a); 24 Anon (1988a); 25 Pollock (2002); 26 Millis et al. (2002); 27 Anon (1953a); 28 Anon (1990); 29 Millis and Bradley (2000); 30 Longman (1922); 31 Illidge (1922); 32 (Anon 1953b); 33 Anon (1956b); 34 Cribb (1956); 35 Anon (1963); 36 Anon (1966); 37 Anon (1983); 38 Anon (1988b); 39 Schulz (1997b); 40 White (1946); 41 Hanger (1990); 42 Anon (1972); 43 Brighouse (1991); 44 Anon (1982b).
Species accounts.

Eastern Pygmy-possum *Cercartetus nanus*. In providing a general description of the fauna of Lamington National Park (NP), Young (1937) states that Eastern Pygmy-possum “is found occasionally living in small hollow pipes in trees”. This may or may not be the same record published by Bernard O'Reilly (1941 p.21) wherein the capture of a single *C. nanus* in Lamington National Park (NP) by his sister Molly O'Reilly was reported. O'Reilly’s specimen is preserved in the Queensland Museum (QM) (J5861) and is also the single *C. nanus* record highlighted by Van Dyck and Longmore (1991). For more recent *C. nanus* records for south-east Qld, see Eyre (2004) and Harris *et al.* (submitted).

Yellow-bellied Glider *Petaurus australis*. This species was recorded during a club excursion to Kroombit Tops (Woodall 1986). Mr. R. O'Brien exhibited slides showing the feeding marks of the Yellow-bellied Glider on trees at Cooloola (Anon 1993a). These localities are included on south-east Qld distribution maps in Eyre (2004). For north Qld, see Winter *et al.* (2004) for a map of locality records, and Goldingay and Quin (2004) for a discussion of this species’ habitat requirements.

Sugar Glider *Petaurus breviceps*. During general meetings of the Club, a number of members have exhibited or given talks on the Sugar Glider (see Anon 1956a; Anon 1982a; Anon 1988a). Despite this, no specific locality records are available from these sources. However, the species has been recorded at Glasshouse Mountains (Jack 1941), Isla Gorge NP (McKenzie 1976), Kroombit Tops (Woodall 1986), Mt. Coot-tha (Pavey *et al.* 1994), Peach Creek in the McIlwraith Range (Shaw 1996), Landsborough (Pollock 2002) and Greenbank Military Reserve (Millis *et al.* 2002). Sugar Glider distribution maps from historic sources and recent systematic surveys have been compiled by Eyre (2004) for southern Qld and Winter *et al.* (2004) for northern Qld.

Squirrel Glider *Petaurus norfolcensis*. Mr. H. A. Longman, Director of the QM, discussed the “flying squirrel” (=Squirrel Glider) and other rare marsupials at one Club lecture (Longman 1922). However, no specific locality records for this species were included in his published notes (Longman 1922). Specimens have also been exhibited at several club meetings (see Anon 1953a; Anon 1969; Anon 1990), but similarly the details of collection localities were not published. Young (1937) reported “*Petaurus sciureus*” (=*Petaurus norfolcensis*) from Lamington NP. Other known localities are Moreton Island (Is.) (Lavery and
Pollitt 1990; Millis et al. 2002), Mt. Coot-tha (Pavey et al. 1994), Greenbank Military Reserve and Karawatha Forest (Millis and Bradley 2000), Lumholtz NP (Hines and McDonald 2003), and South Stradbroke Is. (Brearley et al. 2005). An unusual spotlighting record of a Squirrel Glider sitting on top of a harp (bat) trap at Bundjalung NP in northern New South Wales (NSW) was reported by Schulz (1997a). These and other distribution localities for Squirrel Gliders in Qld appear to be included in Eyre (2004) and Winter et al. (2004).

**Lemuroid Ringtail Possum Hemibelideus lemuroides.** Longman (1920) exhibited *Pseudochirus cervinus* (synonymous with *H. lemuroides*; McKay 1988) from the Atherton Tableland. Vernon (1960) reported the “brush-tailed ringtail” from the Tableland Mountains near Cairns. Strahan (1995) lists this vernacular name as synonymous with Lemuroid Ringtail Possum. This species is endemic to the Wet Tropics area of north Qld (see also Van Dyck and Longmore 1991; Winter et al. 2004).

**Greater Glider Petauroides volans.** Young (1937) stated that the screeches of this species can be heard in places such as “Biana Burra” in Lamington NP. However, this is erroneous as the Greater Glider is virtually silent. Wakefield (1970) discusses how many supposed Greater Glider records based on vocalisations heard are actually the Yellow-bellied Glider. Reliable Greater Glider records are presumed to have been provided for Glasshouse Mountains (Jack 1941), Isla Gorge NP (McKenzie 1976), Kroombit Tops (Woodall 1986), Mt. Coot-tha (Pavey et al. 1994), Charters Towers (Kutt and Skull 1995), Lumholtz NP (Hines and McDonald 2003) and at Bukkulla (Leggett 2004). We note that Kutt and Skull (1995) suggested that Charters Towers probably represented the western limit of Greater Glider distribution in Qld. However, records in Eyre (2004) and Winter et al. (2004) indicate that this is not the case.

**Green Ringtail Possum Pseudocheirrops archeri.** Vernon (1960) reported ‘green possum’ (=Green Ringtail Possum; Strahan 1995) from an area of the Tableland Mountains near Cairns. This species is restricted to the Wet Tropics (Kanowski 2004; Winter et al. 2004).

**Daintree River Ringtail Possum Pseudocheirulus herbertensis.** Longman (1922) mentioned that this species is a ‘rare form’ of marsupial. Vernon (1960) mentioned that it is found in the Tableland Mountains near Cairns. Similar to the preceding species, the Daintree River Ringtail Possum is also restricted to the Wet Tropics.
Common Ringtail Possum *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*. Longman (1931) mentioned that litter sizes of five or six have been observed in this species; however no locality records were provided. Young (1937) indicated that this species occurs frequently in ‘eastern Australia’. Specimens of ‘ring tail possums’, which were presumably Common Ringtail Possums have been exhibited at numerous Club meetings (Anon 1953b; Anon 1956b; Anon 1963; Anon 1966; Anon 1983; Anon 1988b). Distribution records are from Stradbroke Is. (Illidge 1922), Glasshouse Mountains (Jack 1941), Bunya Mountains (Vernon 1960), Eurimbula NP (Woodall 1991), Brisbane and the surrounding suburbs of Bardon, Indooroopilly, Taringa and Toowong (Cribb 1956; Bristow 1962; McKenzie 1969; Pavey *et al.* 1994), Landsborough (Pollock 2002) and Bukkulla (Leggett 2004). Distribution maps for the Common Ringtail Possum have been compiled by Eyre (2004) for southern Qld and Winter *et al.* (2004) for northern Qld.

Feathertail-Glider *Acrobates pygmaeus*. Longman (1920) exhibited a mounted Feathertail Glider at an early meeting of the Club. He also mentioned in a subsequent meeting that this species was a rare form (Longman 1922). Young (1937) indicated that Feathertail Gliders are recorded from Lamington NP. Other records include Glasshouse Mountains (Jack 1941), Landsborough (Pollock 2002), and Lumholtz NP (Hines and McDonald 2003). An interesting record is for an adult male captured in a harp trap at Bundjalung NP (NSW) (Schulz 1997b). Distribution maps for the Feathertail Glider have been compiled by Eyre (2004) for southern Qld and Winter *et al.* (2004) for northern Qld.

Common Spotted Cuscus *Spilocuscus maculatus*. White (1946) reported that this species was eaten by explorers to Papua New Guinea. Other locality records in *The Queensland Naturalist* are from Iron Range (Vernon 1960; Hanger 1990) and from owl pellets collected at Peach Creek in the McIlwraith Range (Shaw 1996). In Australia, this species is restricted to Cape York Peninsula (see Strahan 1995; Winter *et al.* 2004; Heinsohn 2004).

Southern Common Cuscus *Phalanger intercastellanus*. At Peach River, Vernon (1960) collected a specimen of the Brown Cuscus [=Southern Common Cuscus; Flannery 1994], and noted that this species was not known in Australia until the early 1940s. This species is also restricted to Cape York Peninsula (Winter *et al.* 2004).

Mountain Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus caninus*. Records are from Lamington NP (Young 1937), Bunya Mountains (Vernon 1960). A record from Kroombit Tops has been noted as 200 km north of its then known distribution
Viggers and Lindenmayer (2004), report that the northern distribution limits for this species is at Kroombit Tops, and that the common name should stand as the Short-eared Possum. A distribution map for this species has been compiled by Eyre (2004).

Common Brushtail Possum Trichosurus vulpecula. The skull and skeletal remains of a Common Brushtail Possum have been recovered from beneath a Wedge-tailed Eagle’s nest for exhibition at a Club meeting (Anon 1972). Marks and Cribb (1966) provide observations of several tame Common Brushtail Possums at Camp Mountain, and record this species as host for the ticks Ixodes holocyclus and Haemaphysalis bremneri. Distributional records are from Lamington NP (Young 1937), Glasshouse Mountains (Jack 1941), Indooroopilly (McKenzie 1969), Kroombit Tops (Woodall 1986), Moreton Is. (Lavery and Politt 1990), Eurimbula NP (Woodall 1991), Mt. Coot-tha (Pavey et al. 1994), Charters Towers (Kutt and Skull 1995), Lumholtz NP (Hines and McDonald 2003), Bukkulla and Lorna Vale (Leggett 2004), and Station and Croll Creeks in the McLlwraith Range (Shaw 1996). ‘Possums’ (possibly Common Brushtail Possums) are also recorded from Cooloola (Brighouse 1991) and Wallaby Creek (NSW) (Anon 1982b).

Conclusion

This review confirms that a number of historically and ecologically important records of possums and gliders are published in The Queensland Naturalist. However, some of the records, especially the older ones, are of unknown reliability, and there are major gaps in species coverage i.e. currently no records for five species that occur in Qld. This is due to several reasons, including that the five absent species all have highly restricted distributions in north Qld (Winter et al. 2004). Hence, there appears to be a bias towards species that occur in southern Qld and have widespread distributions. For example, the highest numbers of records were for Common Ringtail Possum and Common Brushtail Possum, species widely distributed along the east coast and conspicuous in urban areas in south east Qld. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate naturalists to record and publish more of their observations, and also raise awareness of the importance of including core information (e.g. date and locality) with all records.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge Harry Hines and Peter Woodall for comments regarding this manuscript and the faunal group in general.
References

ANON. (1982a) Evening meeting, 18.2.80, *The Queensland Naturalist*, 23(5-6), 58.


Qd Nat. 44(4-6) 2006 93