Sugar Gliders in the Wild: Habitat, Diet, and Life Span

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

What are sugar gliders?

Sugar gliders are small marsupials, and one of several gliding opossums found in Australia, Tasmania, Indonesia, and New Guinea. Their scientific name is *Petaurus breviceps*. They have a thin membrane that stretches between their front and rear legs, much like the flying squirrels in North America. They are 9½ - 12 inches long and weigh less than 3-4 ounces. Sugar gliders are nocturnal.

What is their normal habitat?

In the wild, sugar gliders live in trees, and rarely, if ever, touch the ground. They nest in holes in old growth trees.

How do they glide?

When a sugar glider launches himself from a tree, he spreads his limbs. The gliding membranes from his wrists to his ankles open up and slow his descent, much like a parachute. He can change the curvature of the membrane by moving his legs to regulate the glide, and also uses his tail (which is as long as his body) like a rudder. They have been known to glide over 150 feet.

What is their normal diet?

In the wild, sugar gliders eat blossoms, flower nectar, sap from eucalyptus trees, acacia gum, and insects.

How do they reproduce?

Sugar gliders mate during the winter and spring, and generally have two young per litter. Sugar gliders, like kangaroos, have a pouch. About 16 days after mating, the small embryos pass through the vagina and crawl to the pouch. There they nurse off of their mother's milk and develop for another 60-70 days. (As in kangaroos, the young are called 'joeys.') After that time, the mother sugar glider will leave them in the nest while she forages for food. At 4 months of age, the young sugar gliders are on their own.

What is their social behavior?

Sugar gliders are extremely social, especially for marsupials. They live in small family groups with up to seven adults and their young in a nest. This also helps to conserve heat when the weather is cold. They have scent glands which they use to mark their territory, and also mark their nest with urine. They communicate using a wide variety of vocal sounds.

How long do sugar gliders live?

In the wild, sugar gliders live about 4-5 years.

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