



**ALL THINGS**

# **SUGAR GLIDERS**

# What is a sugar glider?



## DID YOU KNOW?

Sugar gliders have creamy white fur on their stomach; big, black eyes that are surrounded by dark rings; and a charcoal stripe that runs down the middle of its face to its pink nose.

Sugar gliders are **arboreal marsupials** found in the forests of Australia and New Guinea.

The squirrel-sized species is highly social, and **lives in small colonies** or family groups of up to seven adults and their offspring.

They're mainly **nocturnal** and spend most of their time in trees, rarely coming to the ground.

They can live up to nine years in the wild and require lots of **space and social interaction** to survive and thrive.

Sugar gliders are **light**, weighing between 85 and 140 grams.



# Sugar glider habitat

Sugar gliders inhabit the **northern and eastern parts** of mainland Australia, Tasmania, New Guinea and other associated isles.

Sugar glider habitats are found in **wooded areas with open forest**, and the species appears in areas where there are many tree hollows for shelter and food.

The marsupials are **arboreal**, meaning they find food, shelter and safety in trees. They make leaf nests in tree hollows where they shelter by day.

Their **territories** can expand over two acres of forest, and they mark and protect them with urine and other secretions.

Sugar gliders occupy same geographical area as the squirrel glider, mahogany glider, and yellow-bellied glider.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Fossils of the marsupial thought to be 15,000 years old were found in a cave in Victoria!



Sugar gliders have a **soft membrane** between their wrists and ankles called a **patagium**.

This facilitates gliding from tree to tree, and **acts like a parachute** for the species, which can float on air for a distance of nearly 50 metres! Their **wide field of vision** makes them excellent aviators, and bobbing their heads before launch

allows them to survey distances. They tilt their **hands and arms to direct them when airborne**, adjusting the tension in their 'wings' as their **bushy tail acts as a rudder**.

Their tail is nearly as long as their 6-inch bodies (15 centimetres), and is somewhat **prehensile** (meaning it's capable of grasping), allowing them to carry leaves to their nest.

## How are sugar gliders adapted to their habitat?



### DID YOU KNOW?

As well as having five digits on each toe, opposable toes on their hind feet allow them to grip firmly onto branches. They land gracefully from flight on all four feet.

**Patagium – soft membrane between wrists and ankles**



# How do sugar gliders defend against predators?

When threatened, sugar gliders can secrete an **oily substance** which smells like soured fruit.

They take up a **defensive posture**, which involves standing on their hind legs, extending their head and opening their mouth.

If they're really scared, they may even lie on their back with their feet up and vocalise!

# What do sugar gliders eat?

Their name derives from their proclivity to eat forest sweets like **acacia gum, eucalyptus sap, and flower nectar**.

However, sugar gliders are actually **omnivorous** feeders, and survive on both plant and animal matter.

They feed on the endangered swift parrot's nestlings in Tasmania, threatening the bird's survival.



Photo by Timur Garifov





The species communicates through **scents** produced from different places in males and females.

Each sugar glider has its own signature scent, allowing others to recognise it.

The **dominant male** in the family marks members of his group with **saliva**, so it's easy to tell who belongs to the colony.

They also communicate through a variety of yapping, barking and hissing and droning sounds.

## How do sugar gliders communicate?

### DID YOU KNOW?

'Crabbing' communicates that they're threatened, frightened, or have just awoken from a nap, while purring communicates contentment.

YAP!  
BARK!  
HISS!



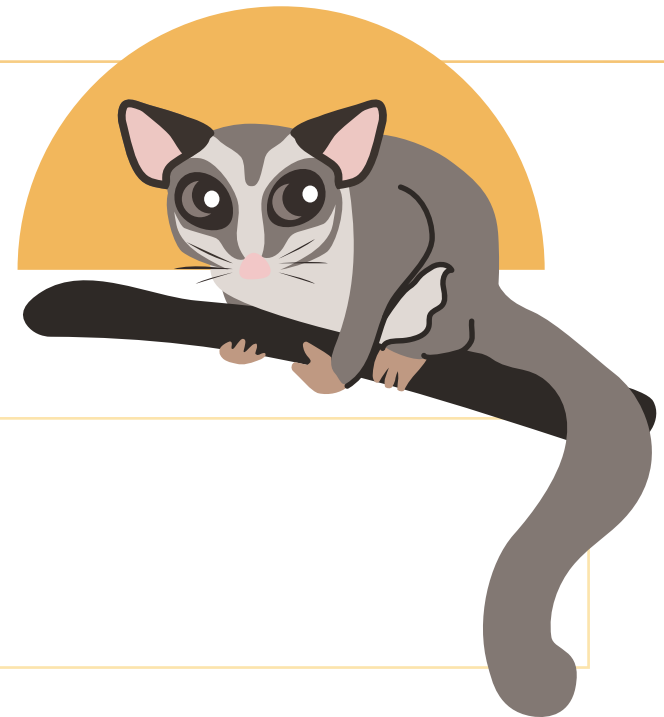
## Conservation


Currently, sugar gliders are classed as a **low-risk species**.

However, habitat loss continues to threaten species all over the world, and may harm the marsupials in the future.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sugar gliders are popular to have as a pet, although they do not cope well in homes.



**SUGAR GLIDER**  
**FACT**  
  
**FILE**

**HABITAT**

**FOOD**

**CREATURE FEATURES**

**Student Instructions:**

**From the information you have just read about Sugar Gliders, create your own fact file on this animal!**





## PROTECTION

## DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE

## CONSERVATION

# SUGAR GLIDER FACT FILE



### Student Instructions:

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