

Sugar Glider

Petaurus breviceps

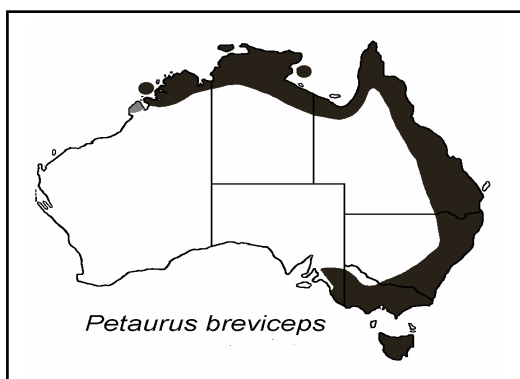
What do they look like?

The Sugar Gliders are small creatures with a shiny grey-silver coat. They are around 40 cm long from nose to tail, and weigh just 150 grams.



The sugar glider is well endowed with sweat glands that presumably allow territorial marking and individual recognition of family members. They are also highly vocal animals and have a range of vocalisations for different occasions. If the nest is disturbed, the occupants emit a rather intimidating chattering sound.

Where do they live?



Sugar Gliders are native to Australia and are found along eastern and northern Australia. The species is also widespread throughout a range of habitats in Tasmania.

Sugar Gliders nest in a hollow of a tree, or in a nest made of twigs and leaves. A number of Sugar Gliders will inhabit the same nest.

What do they eat?

They feed at night, mainly on insects found in trees, but they also have a sweet tooth, consisting of flower nectar, acacia gum and eucalypt sap. They can move about very efficiently from tree to tree and glide through the air.

A gliding possum

These amazing little animals have taken their name from their ability to glide through the air and their love of sweet things such as sugar. Sugar Gliders can glide through the air for up to 100 metres. This remarkable ability to glide is achieved through a flap of loose skin which extends between the fifth finger of the hand to the first toe of the foot. The animal launches itself from a tree, spreads its limbs to expose the gliding membrane and directs its glide through subtle changes in the curvature of the membrane. They use their long tail for stability and steering when gliding through the air.



The species rarely descends to the ground. Presumably gliding serves as both an efficient means of locomotion and an effective way of reducing the risk of predation.

Breeding and Lifecycle

Breeding occurs during the winter and spring months, with two young being the normal litter size. Young spend about 70 days in the pouch before being left in the nest. Longevity in the wild is up to 9 years.

An uncertain future

Gliders are protected in NSW. The greatest threat to gliders comes from the destruction and alteration of the forest habitats in which they live. Gliders need mature forests with lots of tree hollows to nest in. When forest is cleared they lose their home and food supply, and may become prey to other species such as owls, cats and foxes. The gliders are easy targets in cleared or opened-up areas.

The NPWS is protecting forests in national parks, but these form only a small part of the state. The future of gliders outside national parks and other wildlife protection areas is far from certain.



**NSW National Parks
and Wildlife Service**

