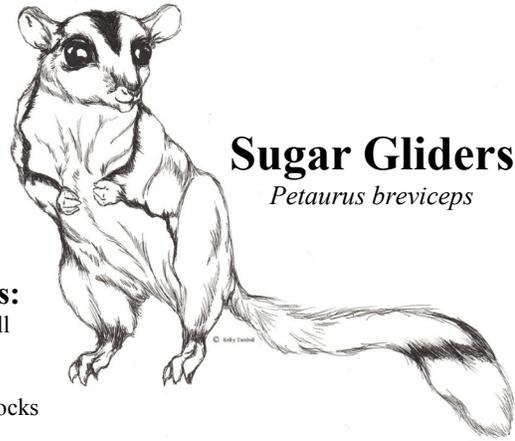


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**Sugar Gliders**  
*Petaurus breviceps*

**Necessities:**

- Cage
- Carefresh® or Aspen Bedding
- Food dish
- Water dish or bottle
- Place to hide/sleep
- Chew sticks
- Wheel
- Glider Aid®
- Branches

**Extras:**

- 10" ball
- Toys
- Treats
- Cage locks

**General:**

With their large, expressive black eyes and ears, slight frame covered with velvety black-and-grey fur, fluffy tail and overall size of approximately 30 cm, sugar gliders are probably one of Mother Nature's greatest creations. They are nocturnal, arboreal marsupials - night lovers that live in trees and carry their young in a pouch - originally found in Australia, Indonesia and New Guinea and now in our homes and hearts. Their name comes from their ability to glide from tree to tree by using gliding membranes that start from their wrists and extend to their ankles as well as their love of nectar, fruits and sweet vegetables. In their native habitat an entire family of 12 or more males and females will inhabit and defend a single feeding tree, using scent to determine who the intruders are. The dominant males of the family unit mark all other group members. Gliders have scent glands in their forehead, chest, anal region, surfaces of their hands and feet, the corners of their mouths and the surface of their external ears. They bond with their human companions as they would with their family unit. With a lifespan of approximately 10 years, males reach sexual maturity around 12 months and females even sooner. Males are slightly larger, have a scent gland on the top of the head, a protruding penis and a small circular patch where one might expect to see a belly button. Females have a small pouch. The female's estrus cycle lasts approximately 29 days with a gestation period of about 16 days and a litter size of 1-3. The young first release the nipple at about 40 days old, first leave the pouch at about 70 days, first leave the nest at about 111 days and are independent shortly thereafter.

**Handling:**

The bonding of gliders is a slow process and takes patience and understanding. First of all, gliders are timid and defensive by nature. They react to things that scare them by emitting a high piercing screech while standing on their back legs with their forelegs spread out (this is their way of trying to look bigger and meaner than they are). Do not be fooled by their small size as they can bite if they feel threatened. Gliders learn to recognize the scent of their human companions. Here are some ideas to help the bonding process that are working well for us. You may hear some screeching at first, but this is an automatic response to new situations. When you first get your glider, rub your hands in their bedding before placing them in their home and offer the first pieces of their meal from your hands each day. After a few days, when you are sure that your glider is eating well, try to approach the glider from behind - talking softly and moving slowly - to gently scratch and rub its head and ears. After a few more days, when your glider seems less defensive about this approach, use a gloved hand to try to encourage it to hold on (gliders don't appreciate being grabbed) and continue the head and ear scratching and rubbing with the other hand. Within a few more days you'll be able to bring the glider out of the cage on the gloved hand to offer it your other hand to climb/hold onto. At this point he/she will start using you as a tree, trying to make a nest out of your hair. Usually by the end of a couple of weeks you can slowly let your glider smell your hand to recognize your scent and it will not be as defensive when you scoop it up in your hand to bring it out of its home. Remember that daily attention is very important: you are its family unit. This is a very special bond and should not be taken lightly. DO NOT use hand sanitizers before handling.

**Exercise:**

Gliders are extremely curious and mischievous. They will enjoy many different types of toys and experimentation is half the fun. Try different types of bird toys and small animal toys. They can enjoy wheels, wood bird chews, beaded toys and different hiding beds. Anything that might have strings or threads MUST be checked daily for safety.

**Housing & Bedding:**

Proper housing is very important. The environment should be no smaller than 18" x 18" x 20". You can use a bird cage with parakeet-width bars or a welded wire cage with openings no larger than 1" x 1/2" (please clean entire cage with vinegar and water before using). Fresh-cut branches (helps to keep teeth and nails healthy) of apple, maple, pear or willow (no fertilizers or pesticides) should be used to give as much climbing space as possible. Using a cement bird perch is also helpful to keep toenails well groomed. The branches will need to be replaced periodically as the gliders remove the bark and defecate and urinate frequently. The substrate should be easily cleanable - hygiene is very important so as not to attract unwanted pests. You can use Carefresh® or Aspen shavings. Do not use newspaper or cedar shavings. A parakeet breeding box (6" x 8" x 6") or cork round with shredded paper towels or cloth cube, placed high yet easily accessible for cleaning, works well as a nesting area. Your new glider home should be placed in a quiet and not brightly lit area (gliders are nocturnal and timid). Nighttime temperatures should not be lower than 70 degrees and daytime temperatures no higher than 90 degrees. The cage will need to be cleaned each week with a 10% bleach and water solution. Remember to rinse thoroughly. DO NOT use any other type of household cleaner.

**Diet:**

The diet is varied and should consist of 75% fruits and sweet veggies and 25% protein. Care must be taken not to let your glider become obese after it reaches adulthood. Following is a list of appropriate foods: Frozen corn and mixed vegetables, fresh apples, sweet potatoes, grapes, carrots, pears, cantaloupe, watermelon, strawberries, bananas, peaches, pineapple, figs, dates, raw peanuts, a high quality dry cat food like Evo® or Nutro Natural Choice®, mealworms, crickets, low-fat or non-fat yogurt, cottage cheese. Vitamins with amino acids should be given daily. Glider Aid® should be given approximately once a week. Make sure that food and filtered water is given fresh daily (twice a day if it is warm). Care must be taken to remove all old food.

The following is a recipe that can be frozen into ice cube trays and can be given daily as a supplement to the diet to make sure that they are getting a well rounded diet.

**Bourbon's Modified Leadbeaters (BML) Mix**

½ cup Honey

¼ cup Apple Juice

4 oz. of premixed Mixed Fruit Yogurt Gerber Juice

2 jars of chicken baby food (½ oz each)

1 Hard boiled egg (leave the shell on)

¼ cup Wheat Germ

½ cup Mixed Grain or Oatmeal Gerber Baby cereal (dry flakes)

2 tsp Rep-Cal® (Calcium supplement with Vitamin D3 and no phosphorus)

1 tsp Herptivite® Vitamin Supplement

Blend the honey, egg, and apple juice in a blender until smooth. Turn off the blender and add the Gerber juice and Herptivite® Vitamin Supplement. Blend until smooth and then turn off blender. Add the Rep-cal® Calcium Supplement, the chicken baby food, wheat germ, and dry baby cereal. Blend until smooth. Pour mixture into ice cube trays, filling each compartment only halfway\*, and place into the freezer.

(\*The volume of a full ice cube in standard ice cube trays equals about 2 Tbsp. This diet should be served in 1 Tbsp. increments, so if frozen in this way, each "BML cube" contains a daily dose.)

**Lighting & Heat:**

Sugar gliders need to be kept at temperatures between 65-90 degrees F and their ideal temperature range is 75-80 degrees F. They MUST have a day/night cycle to ensure good eating and activity levels. Special types of lighting are not necessary as long as they are getting a definite day and night cycle.

**Health and Wellbeing:**

Gliders are a special-needs pet. They cannot be without food; their metabolism is very fast and, when stressed, can crash their blood sugar. Food must be fresh everyday. They do not like loud, crazy environments and they do not like being manhandled. The most common health problems are usually dietary. Dr. Karen Obegi is our favorite vet for gliders and she can be reached at 206-365-1102.