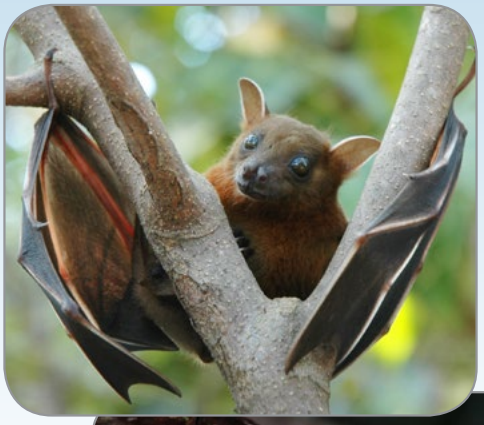

Mammals That Fly or Glide

Mammals that fly (bats) or glide (e.g., flying squirrels, flying lemurs, sugar gliders) do best in enclosures that offer opportunities to engage in their unique natural behaviors.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bats are the only mammals that can truly fly, but there are several species that glide.

FLYING AND GLIDING

Sufficient three-dimensional space in the enclosure will allow for flying or gliding. Bats in particular need open horizontal space and enough room to easily spread their wings without touching the sides of their enclosure. If bats are confined to small spaces, their muscles will waste from lack of use.

Gliding animals also need both horizontal and vertical space. To glide, they start by leaping or dropping from a high location, like parachuting. But the movement is at a shallower angle—not a straight-down drop. They glide across and down at the same time, so need plenty of room to move in both directions.

ROOSTING

Bats need roosting space made of the correct substrate for gripping (non-abrasive materials, like vinyl- or other synthetic-coated, non-galvanized wire or polyethylene mesh). This space should be large enough for all of your bats to rest comfortably at the same time.

Having a place where they can hang upside down from a high position also supports flight. Most species of bats need to fall into flight because their wings cannot produce enough lift for take-off, and they cannot generate enough speed to launch into the air.

CLIMBING

Elevated spaces are also important for mammals that glide. In the wild, they climb trees, launch, and then stretch out their limbs, using the extra skin between their limbs to control descent and steering. Many of these species use this skill to travel from tree to tree and rarely spend time on the ground. They benefit from having multiple tree-like climbing structures or perches at various heights in their enclosure.

PRACTICAL TIP

Having a soft substrate on the floor of the enclosure is a good safety measure for flying and gliding mammals.

ANIMAL CARE AID

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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