



Gliding Mammals of the World

Stephen Jackson, Peter Schouten

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The world's gliding mammals are an extraordinary group of animals that have the ability to glide from tree to tree with seemingly effortless grace. There are more than 60 species of gliding mammals including the flying squirrels from Asia, Europe and North America, the scaly-tailed flying squirrels from central Africa and the gliding possums of Australia and New Guinea. But the most spectacular of all are the colugos – or so called flying lemurs – that occur throughout South-East Asia and the Philippines.

Animals that glide from tree to tree descend at an angle of less than 45 degrees to the horizontal, while those that parachute descend at an angle greater than 45 degrees. Gliding is achieved by deflecting air flowing past well-developed gliding membranes, or patagia, which form an effective airfoil that allows the animal to travel the greatest possible horizontal distance with the least loss in height. The flying squirrels and scaly-tailed flying squirrels even have special cartilaginous spurs that extend either from the wrist or elbow, respectively, to help support the gliding membrane.

Gliding Mammals of the World provides, for the first time, a synthesis of all that is known about the biology of these intriguing mammals. It includes a brief description of each species, together with a distribution map and a beautiful full-colour painting. An introduction outlines the origins and biogeography of each group of gliding mammals and examines the incredible adaptations that allow them to launch themselves and glide from tree to tree.

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