

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Flying Squirrels

by Guy Belleranti

Which can fly higher and further: a blue jay or a flying squirrel? Actually, this is a trick question. You see, a flying squirrel can't fly. While it might look like it's flying, it's actually gliding. It leaps from one tree and glides through the air to another tree.



Photo Courtesy of the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, New Haven, CT, YPM MAM 014944

## What's the difference between flying and gliding?

When an animal flies through the air, it is using its wings for power. Many species of birds, insects, and bats can flap their wings to take off and stay in flight.

Flying squirrels spread their feet outwards, exposing a furry membrane that stretches between its front and back legs. This membrane is called a patagium and it is used to glide.



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other side, escaping any predator that may have followed.

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## How far can a flying squirrel glide?

A typical gliding distance for a flying squirrel would be about 100 feet (30 meters). This is about as long as a basketball court. The longest recorded distance observed was nearly 300 feet (100 meters), or the length of a football field.

### Where do flying squirrels live?

There are over 40 species of flying squirrels. Most live in the forests of Asia and India. Two species live in the northern and eastern parts of North America.

### Will I see flying squirrels gliding above me in the woods?

If you're walking through the woods in the daytime, you probably won't see flying squirrels. They are nocturnal animals. This means they're active at night.

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Flying squirrels are omnivores. Their favorite foods are nuts, seeds, berries, insects, and bird eggs.

### Where do flying squirrels go during the day?

The flying squirrel usually spends the day hiding in the trees. Tree cavities, woodpecker holes, and abandoned bird nests are some of its favorite hiding places. The flying squirrel is not able to run as quickly as its non-flying relatives, so it doesn't spend much time on or near the ground.



## About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from research, as well as his experiences working with animals and teaching others.

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1. According to the information in the article, which of these things does not fly?
- a. a jet airplane
  - b. a paper airplane
  - c. a helicopter
  - d. a butterfly

2. How does a flying squirrel's flat tail help in the gliding process?

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3. According to the article, why doesn't the flying squirrel spend much time on the



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4. Flying squirrels do not live in...
- a. Brazil.
  - b. the United States.
  - c. China.
  - d. Canada.

5. The flying squirrel's name is misleading from a scientific point-of-view. Explain.

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Fill in the missing letters to create a word from the story.  
Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ p \_\_\_ s i n \_\_\_

**hint:** making something visible; uncovering

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ m \_\_\_ r a \_\_\_ e

**hint:** skin; outer covering

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ \_\_\_ u t \_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4.



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5.

**hint:** antonym for prey

6. g \_\_\_ \_\_\_ r \_\_\_ n \_\_\_ \_\_\_

**hint:** promise

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ v \_\_\_ t \_\_\_ e s

**hint:** holes; empty or hollowed out spaces

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Two Types of Squirrels

Compare and Contrast

In the article, "Flying Squirrels" by Guy Belleranti, you learned about flying squirrels.



Compare and contrast flying squirrels to other squirrels that you have seen. Write two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, describe three or more ways the two types of squirrels are alike. In the second paragraph, list three or more ways they are different.

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## ANSWER KEY



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**hint:** making something visible; uncovering



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