



# Lucky Glider Rescue & Sanctuary

Community Outreach for Sugar Gliders

a 501(c)(3) nonprofit rescue

## BONDING TIPS

Here are some tips on bonding that might be helpful for you. The word "bonding" is a little misleading because at first it's really more about establishing trust and eliminating fear. Bonding comes much later.

**1. Patience.** Some gliders will take many months to learn to trust you; others will trust you right away. Hang in there it takes time.

**2. In the beginning,** it is enough to just sit next to their cage and softly speak to them or sing to them or even read a book to them. Alternately offer treats either through the cage bars or by putting a liquid on your finger and letting them lick it off (lickey treat). That can be juice or yogurt mixed with honey or even a meal worm.

**3. A bonding pouch** that you can carry them around in during the day often helps. Be sure to use one that has a mesh "window" so they can get plenty of air. Put your hand in and offer food or water to lick from your finger. You can pet them while they sleep or if they are sleepy. They may bite you. Don't over-react. If you withdraw your hand violently or jerkily, that will scare them. Hold your screams, withdraw slowly and go scream in another room without them 😊. You must place your hand back again to demonstrate you we're scared off and the glider "won."

**4. Skin-To-Fur.** Don't use the bonding pouch as a crutch. If they are always in the pouch and you never attempt to take them out to pet them in your hand they may become "pouch spoiled." The more direct skin-to-fur contact you have the better. Some don't like to be "held" but almost all of them will tolerate some gentle stroking. If they crab a lot that does not mean they hate you. It means they are scared or they are yelling at you for bothering them. You can cup them tightly to simulate the closeness of a pouch and sometimes that calms them. Softly speak to them when they crab to reassure them.

**5. An alternative to the pouch** is two big t-shirts worn together. You tuck them both in and let them run around between them. Our glider rescue friend Angie H sews the bottoms and sleeves together and that also works great.

**6. Close quarters.** You can use a bathroom or a tent to let them roam around with you in the same space. In the beginning, we used a tent based on the following benefits:

**A. Safety.** If you have an area with appliances out in the open (like refrigerators with fans underneath or stoves with pilot lights), a tent is a glider-proof safety zone.

**B. Forces interaction.** If you are in a small space, you don't have to grab them and stuff them in a pouch to interact. They can crawl on you and touch you on their terms. It makes it easier for them to encounter you because there is so little space, they almost can't help but to interact.

**C. Simulation of nesting-mate.** The tent being a small, enclosed space almost simulates a nesting box in which you get to "climb in" as one of the gliders.

**7. Play.** You need to play with them. Tease them with feathers. Put them on ropes or soft material draped over tall things so they can climb around. "Play chase" them with your fingers. "Finger Wrestle" with them and roll them on their backs and tickle their tummies. In short, do things that force interaction. They'll let you know what they don't like.

**8. Cage and "Out of Cage" Space.** Make it as big as you can. The more room they have to move around, the better adjusted they will be. So long as you can make the area safe, let them have the run of a room for a while. They love to run, and jump and play. Give them space and they come around a lot faster.

**9. Learning.** Gliders will teach you what they like and how they want to play. Some like being held and petted some don't. Some will crawl all over you repeatedly, some for shorter periods of time.