Gargoyle Gecko

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

species profile:

GARGOYLE gecko

Gargoyle Geckos are rapidly gaining in popularity among reptile owners. They are easy to handle and care for, and they don't require the complicated care regimens that many reptiles do. Because of this, they make a great pet whether you're a beginner or an experienced reptile owner.

Species Profile: Gargoyle Gecko	
Scientific Name:	*Rhacodactylus auriculatus*
Natural Environment:	Islands of New Caledonia (Southwest Pacific near Australia).
Average Size:	8" to 9".
Average Life Span:	15 years (in captivity).
Appearance:	The Gargoyle Gecko has a flattened, triangular head with large eyes. It is called the "Gargoyle" gecko because of the knobs on the top of its head and the large teeth that are reminiscent of stone gargoyles. It has a stocky build.
Habitat	
Size:	20 gallon terrarium for 1 or 2 geckos, 29 gallon or larger for bigger groups.

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Lighting:

Gargoyle Geckos are nocturnal, so they do not require UV light. One to two hours of UV light a day may be helpful as long as they can move to areas to get out of the light. Use a guarded strip light above the enclosure to provide natural photoperiods - 14 hours of light, 10 hours of dark in the summer and 10 hours of light, 14 hours of dark in the winter with a gradual change between the two. You can also use nocturnal red reptile bulbs at night. Gargoyle Geckos may like to bask for a short period during the day, so we recommend the use of a 75 watt basking lamp.

Temperature:

Gargoyle Geckos' habitats should be kept at room temperature, between 65° and 80°F, and these geckos are most comfortable at temperatures in the mid 70s. Temperatures above 85°F or below 65°F should be avoided, as they are detrimental to your gecko's overall physical and mental well-being.

Humidity:

70% to 80%; the habitat should be misted once in the evening (or more often if you use a wire mesh cage) to keep humidity high.

Housing:

Gargoyle Geckos are arboreal, meaning they spend much of their time high in the trees. Therefore, you must use a tall terrarium rather than a long, short one so you can provide plenty of space for them to climb and jump. We recommend a glass or Plexiglas enclosure if you live in areas with low humidity. Owners who live in areas with higher humidity can use a cage with sides made of wire mesh.

Provide plenty of areas for your gecko to hide and perch. Hiding places can include cardboard tubes, bamboo tubes, PVC pipe, commercial reptile shelters, and anything else that will give it a sense of security. A variety of real or artificial plants will give the habitat a more natural feel as well as provide additional hiding places. Perches can include vines, driftwood, and cork bark. Though Gargoyle Geckos do have lamellae on their feet, they cannot grip smooth surfaces like other geckos can, so you must provide climbing areas and perches with rough surfaces.

Gargoyle Geckos will also require a hide area that has very high humidity, such as a hide box filled with Eco Earth substrate that you mist daily. In addition to hiding in it, females will also lay eggs in there if you are keeping a breeding group.

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Substrate:	Peat moss, cypress mulch, coconut substrate or another substrate that holds moisture. Avoid particulate substrates, as your Gargoyle Gecko could accidentally ingest it.
Diet/Feeding:	Gargoyle Geckos are omnivores, and they eat insects, nectar, and fruit in the wild. In captivity, you can offer them a variety of foods, including commercial Gecko diets, pure fruit baby food, and insects such as crickets, locusts, cutworms, silkworms, and the occasional waxworm. Avoid hard-bodied worms such as mealworms. If you supplement your gecko's diet with crickets and other insects, be sure to gutload the insects first and then dust them with a calcium and multivitamin reptile supplement before feeding them to your gecko. Some Gargoyle Geckos are picky about eating crickets and other insects, but if you try feeding them a slightly larger insect, they will usually eat that. Gargoyle Geckos will lick the moisture off of leaves and other accessories in the habitat after you mist it, but you will still need to offer a shallow water dish as well. Change it daily to keep it clean and fresh.
Behavior/Interaction:	You can keep Gargoyle Geckos in groups, but only after they are adults. Juvenile Gargoyle Geckos will bite each other's tails off. If you are housing adults together, be sure to only have one male per group, and provide enough hiding and perching spots for all of the geckos. Gargoyle Geckos can be handled frequently once they are used to you, but you must be careful to handle them gently and not grip them too tightly. If they are stressed or feel threatened, they will drop their tails.
Interesting Facts:	Gargoyle Geckos are often very vocal at night, making a wide range of noises including barks, squeaks, and growls. This is how they communicate with each other.

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