

## East African Spiny-tailed Lizard

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



species  
profile:

# spiny-tailed LIZARD

The East African Spiny-tailed lizard is known by a number of names, including Dwarf Sungazer lizard and Tropical Girdled lizard. They are often mistakenly sold as Armadillo lizards (*Cordylus cataphractus*) in many pet stores, so do your research before purchasing to make sure that you are getting the lizard you want.

### Species Profile: East African Spiny-tailed Lizard

**Scientific Name:** *Cordylus tropidosternum*

**Natural Environment:** Central, east, and southern Africa in dry, semi-arid regions

**Average Size:** 6" to 7"

**Average Life Span:** 25 years or more

**Appearance:** East African Spiny-Tailed lizards are dark brown with areas of stripes of dark brown and cream. They have black stripes on both sides of their neck running from their ears to their shoulders. Their lips, throat, and abdomen are cream colored. As their name suggests, they have a very spiny tail. Males have slightly wider heads than females.



#### Habitat

**Size:** 20 gallon terrarium for one, 40 gallons or larger for a group.

<b>Lighting:</b>	UVB lighting 12 to 14 hours a day, <a href="#">basking lamp</a> , non-white light heat lamp at night.
<b>Temperature:</b>	86° F during the day with a basking area of 120° to 130° F, 60° to 75° F at night. Use <a href="#">under tank heaters</a> and heat bulbs to maintain temperatures. Monitor temperatures with at least two <a href="#">thermometers</a> , one in the basking area and the other at the opposite cooler end.
<b>Humidity:</b>	50% to 60%; monitor with a <a href="#">hygrometer</a> .
<b>Housing:</b>	<p>Because the temperature of the basking area is so hot, East African Spiny-tailed lizards need a very large habitat to provide enough room for the proper temperature gradients. The most important features in their enclosure are the hiding spots. Create numerous hiding spots throughout the temperature gradient using stacked rocks, logs, and other materials, making sure they are arranged securely in such a way that they cannot fall onto the lizards. Or, use <a href="#">commercial reptile shelters</a> to create hiding spots. East African Spiny-tailed lizards will retreat to these "burrows" when they need to cool down or when they are stressed.</p> <p>In addition to these hiding spots, you will also want to supply <a href="#">vines</a> for climbing, as well as design one area in the cooler end as a water area. This should be done by placing cupped rocks and possibly a plant to catch water that you mist (only on this area). This will provide them with drinking water as well as a moist area of substrate to lie on and soak up water. You should also provide a shallow water dish that is large enough to allow for complete submersion during shedding periods.</p>
<b>Substrate:</b>	Coconut fiber, sand
<b>Diet/Feeding:</b>	In captivity, East African Spiny-tailed lizards are omnivores, and their diet will consist mainly of <a href="#">crickets</a> , <a href="#">mealworms</a> , and grasshoppers. These insects should be gutloaded and dusted with a <a href="#">calcium and vitamin supplement</a> . When feeding worms, be sure to place them in a feeding dish to prevent accidental ingestion of substrate.
<b>Behavior/Interaction:</b>	Some East African Spiny-tailed lizards will respond well to regular, gentle handling, while others will hide when you try to handle them. Those that are receptive to interaction can be trained to eat from your hand. Males are aggressive towards other males of the same species. so only keep one male per

group.

**Interesting Facts:**

When they feel threatened, these lizards will enter one of their hiding spots, then inflate themselves so they cannot be pulled out easily.