



Green (Plumed) Basilisk *Basiliscus basiliscus*

Brown (Striped) Basilisk *Basiliscus vittatus*

- Basilisks are medium sized lizards indigenous to the tropical rainforests, riverbanks, and surrounding wetlands of Mexico, Costa Rica, and other areas of central America, as well as into northern South America.
- Basilisks can be easily identified (especially males) by their tall casque like helmeted crests atop their heads, and raise sail along their dorsum and tail. The brown basilisk ranges from brown to grayish brown with a pair of paler whitish to yellowish stripes along each side of the body. The green (plumed) basilisk ranges from light to moderate green in color with paler whitish to bluish and blackish flecks along each side of the body.
- Basilisks are often known the “Jesus Christ” lizards due to the increased surface area created by their hind feet and toes allowing them to run bipedially over water for short distances.
- If provided the proper care, basilisks can attain longevity of 10-15 years or more.

Size

Basilisks range from 5 -7 inches as hatchlings, and 24-36” as adults (3-3 ½ feet) depending on the sex and species.

Housing

Basilisks are quite semi arboreal lizards, and housing and enclosures must allow for ample height and climbing opportunities. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling basilisks can be housed in a 15-20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Depending on the size of adult specimens of each species, a minimum of a 3’ by 5’ to 4’ by 6’ enclosure should be provided for housing an adult basilisk. Hatchling and adults will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, paper towel, pesticide free pitting soil, or peat/sphagnum moss. For water, mist hatchlings and juveniles at least twice per day and adults at least 2-3 times weekly as well as their food. A large, shallow water bowl or dish should also be provided and be changed and cleaned regularly. Provide sufficient and ample artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs or sturdy branches for ample basking, climbing, and hiding opportunities. Keep at about 80% humidity overall.

As with many reptiles, basilisks will also require UVA/UVB lighting. For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure. Ideal temperatures for basilisks range from 80-85 degrees F on the cool and ambient temperatures and around 90-95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Also spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, basilisks are omnivorous, meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter. They will eat an assortment of insects and other invertebrates, fruit and vegetable material, and even other small animals on occasion such as small birds, mammals, or reptiles.

Feed basilisks in captivity a small amount or assortment of chopped up vegetables (including carrots, peas, collard and dandelion greens, and beans). Feed green leaf lettuce sparingly if at all. Basilisks will also readily accept appropriately sized feeder insects including crickets, mealworms, superworms, feeder roaches, and waxworms. Gut load

these prey items by feeding them commercially available diets for added nutritional value. Basilisks may eat pinky mice as well, but feed them these sparingly, if at all. Feed basilisks these insects in a bowl or dish daily to every other day. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements in their diets whenever possible.

Handling

As with many reptiles, hatchling and juvenile basilisks often tend to be initially more nervous and defensive. Handle your basilisk gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Overall, many basilisks tend to be somewhat more skittish, fast moving, and flighty lizards than many other popular species in captivity when it comes to handling, but they can become accustomed to and tolerate some levels of handling by the more intermediate enthusiast or pet owner. Adult basilisks can become impressive and attractive medium sized display animals as well.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****