



## Chinese Water Dragon *Physignathus cocincinus*

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- The Chinese, or green water dragon, is a medium sized to large agamid lizard ranging in color from light to dark green or greenish brown with a series of whitish or pale bluish stripes along its lateral sides and dark banding on the tail. Their chin, lower jawline, and ventral surface ranges from white to pale bluish, and a row of low dorsal spines is evident, especially on males.
- Native to China and the Indo-Chinese region of eastern and southeastern Asia.
- Water dragons frequently inhabit habitats near water, where they will often escape potential threats by taking to the water and submerging themselves.
- Water dragons can make for a personable and attractive species of reptile pet, but require properly sized enclosures and adequate amounts of research beforehand.
- If provided the proper care, water dragons can attain longevity of 10-15 years or more.

### **Size**

Ranges from 5 -7 inches as hatchlings, and 36-42" as adults (3-3 ½ feet).

### **Housing**

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling water dragons can be housed in a 15-20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult water dragons require a minimum of a 3'X3'X4' terrarium or enclosure or larger. Hatchling and adult water dragons will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, paper towel, pesticide free pitting soil, or 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 artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs or branches for ample basking, climbing, and hiding opportunities. Keep at about 80% humidity overall.

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure. Ideal temperatures for water dragons range from 82-88 degrees F on the cool side and around 95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Water dragons require overhead UVB incandescent and fluorescent lighting to thrive. 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, Chinese water dragons 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 water dragons 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. Water dragons will also accept crickets, mealworms, superworms, feeder roaches, and waxworms. Gut load these prey items by feeding them commercially available diets for added nutritional value. Water dragons may eat pinky mice as well, but feed them these sparingly, if at all. Feed water dragons these insects in a bowl or dish daily to every other day. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements in water dragon diets whenever possible.

### **Handling**

As with many reptiles, hatchling and juvenile Chinese water dragons may tend to be initially more nervous and defensive. Handle your water dragon gently and

deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most adult water dragons will settle down considerably and become quite tame and personable pets to keep.

\*\*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\*\*