



*Dan Thomas/Animal House Pets & Supplies

Day Geckos (*Phelsuma* sp.)

Charismatic and Famous Geckos

Day Geckos are small to large, colorful arboreal geckos consisting of over 70 known species which can be quite variable in color and appearance depending on species. They can be insectivorous to frugivorous species (feeding on fruit and vegetable matter, as well as honey, nectar, and pollens). Most, however, have vibrant green, blue, red, or orange coloration, and well defined toe pads which they use to climb and adhere to many different surfaces. These toe pads are lined with pads known as lamellae, and millions of microscopic hairs known as setae that use van der Waals forces. Unlike most other species of geckos, day geckos are primarily a diurnal species (active during the day) and lack eye lids, using their tongues instead for eye cleaning. Madagascar day geckos are an iconic species of gecko that is widely associated with tropical to sub-tropical, exotic locations and environments, and is likely the genus of geckos which has inspired the popular talking Geico gecko appearing in many different TV commercials, and other media promotions.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Gekkota

Family: Gekkonidae

Subfamily: Gekkoninae

Genus: *Phelsuma*

Species: *Phelsuma* sp.*

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Madagascar day geckos can attain longevity of 8 to 12 years or more.

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Distribution and Habitat

Day geckos are indigenous to the tropical to sub-tropical rainforests and woodlands of Madagascar and surrounding islands with about 70 known species altogether. Their ranges, lifestyles, and habitat preferences may further vary depending on the species or subspecies as well.

Conservation Status

Conservation status is dependent upon the species. Some are IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC), Endangered (EN), Critically Endangered (CE), Near Threatened (NT), Vulnerable (VU), or Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced.

Size

Madagascar day geckos can vary in size depending upon the species, with members of this genus ranging from 2 ½ to 12 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof, and the size of the enclosure recommended will depend on the age, species, and size of the gecko. For hatchlings up to 6 months or so, a 5 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 10 to 40 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used depending upon the species. All species of day geckos are arboreal, and height is more important than floor space. Provide plenty of live or artificial plants, branches, cork bark, or other furnishings for ample climbing and hiding opportunities. Substrates that retain and hold humidity well are recommended, and naturalistic substrates can include sphagnum moss and fir shavings, natural moss, or similar substrates. To maintain humidity and hydration, daily or regular misting is necessary. They will drink the condensation from the enclosure's furnishings and walls, and a small water dish can also be provided, and must be kept clean, but will usually be seldom used.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Day geckos are primarily diurnal, and will also require the proper UVA/UVB lighting and a thermal gradient and regular misting in the enclosure for their optimal health and well-being. Create a thermal gradient, or a warm side in the enclosure with an appropriate incandescent bulb for a basking area of around 90 to 95 degrees F and a cooler area of around 80 to 86 degrees F. Nighttime temperatures can be permitted to drop to around 75 degrees F. Access to natural sunlight, although not required, is also beneficial for these geckos. 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 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Microphagous to Frugivorous; In the wild, day geckos are insectivorous to frugivorous, meaning they will eat insects and other invertebrates as well as fruit and vegetable matter. Some species are also microphagous, meaning they will also eat tiny insects and other invertebrates as well. In captivity, many commercially available fruit based diets are available that contain many of the essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals required for their optimal

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health and nutrition. These diets are quite simple to use and prepare for your animal(s) as instructed. Feeder crickets, roaches, superworms, waxworms, mealworms, and microfauna such as isopods, springtails, and fruit fly cultures or other small insects of appropriate size can also be given depending on the species, but should be no larger than the animal's snout to eye. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Food should be offered in a small dish mounted off of the enclosure's floor, particularly for largely arboreal species that seldom come to the enclosure floor. Be sure that calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation needs are still being met with any diets used for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Most day geckos will not tolerate frequent handling, and have soft, delicate skin that can easily be torn or injured, and therefore, handling should be kept to a minimum. These geckos are better left viewed rather than handled. Many can become quite bold and accustomed to being fed or otherwise being around humans, however.

****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****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility.

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