



Emerald Swift *Sceloporus malachiticus*

- Emerald swifts are small members of the large, diverse “spiny lizard” family. Emerald swifts are indigenous to the high altitude “cloud forests” of Mexico and much of central America
- Scales are heavily keeled, giving them a spiny texture and appearance. Males are usually more vibrantly colored than females or juveniles, and are vibrant green with blue patches along their sides, belly, tails, and chins. Females and juveniles are gray to grayish brown with dark, irregular dorsal markings.
- If provided the proper care, emerald swifts can attain longevity of 5-10 years or more.

Size

Emerald swifts reach 6-9” as adults.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling swifts can be housed in a 5-10 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Swifts are active, diurnal lizards that require a minimum of a 20-30 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Multiple animals that are housed together must have accordingly larger accommodations, although males especially, are territorial. Emerald swifts should be maintained on substrates that retain moderate humidity, such as cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, and/or reptile bark substrates. For water, moderate humidity levels should be kept up. Mist hatchlings and juveniles at least twice per day and adults at least 2-3 times weekly as well as their food. Maintain at about 60% humidity. A small, shallow waterbowl can also be provided. Swifts will also climb, and are semi arboreal. Provide artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, slabs, or logs for ample basking, climbing, and hiding opportunities.

Swifts will also bask, and thus a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter should be provided. Being from relatively cooler cloud forests, ideal temperatures for swifts range from 75-80 degrees F as an ambient temperature and around 90-95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Swifts will require overhead UVA and UVB incandescent and/or 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, swifts are primarily insectivorous, feeding on small insects and other invertebrates they can catch and consume.

In captivity, swifts are insectivorous to somewhat omnivorous. Feeder insects (crickets, mealworms, waxworms, roaches, and superworms) can be given 3-4 times weekly for adults, and daily to every other day for juveniles. Swifts can become quite accustomed to human interaction, and can often become hand fed or will accept food from a bowl or dish.

Providing calcium and vitamin D3 supplements or supplementation (i.e. dusting) in emerald swift diets whenever possible is also important.

Handling

Emerald swifts can be handled or restrained for short periods of time, but are typically not an overly suitable hands on species that tolerates frequent and/or prolonged handling. Too much handling will stress this species, and they are better maintained overall as a more hands off animal whenever possible.

**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**