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Emerald Tree Skink (*Lamprolepis smaragdina*)

Arboreal Emeralds of the Solomon Islands

Emerald tree skinks are a medium to large skink species also known as the green tree skink, or Tabili (in the Philippines). This is a moderately built skink with smooth, dark edged scalation of bright lime green, sometimes grading into a less colorful grayish to brownish –gray on the hind quarters and tail. The head is fairly long and pointed as well. Although relatively little more is currently known about the natural history of these vibrant green skinks, they are occasionally seen and are available in the pet industry, where they can do well for the more intermediate to moderate pet owner or enthusiast looking for an uncommon, beautiful, and unique species.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Scincomorpha

Family: Scincidae

Subfamily: Lygosominae

Genus: *Lamprolepis*

Species: *Lamprolepis smaragdina**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

Captive longevity for emerald tree skinks is still uncertain, however, if provided the correct care, these skinks can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years, or slightly more.

Distribution and Habitat

Emerald tree skinks are a medium sized to large, arboreal skink species indigenous to the tropical forests, woodlands, and savannahs of southern to southeastern Asia, including Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. Emerald tree skinks most often live on and within the bare tree trunks, and other vegetation within the above mentioned range.

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

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Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Adult emerald tree skinks can range in size from 7 to 10 inches on average.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. These are arboreal skink species, and should thus be housed in an appropriate 30 to 40 gallon tall terrarium or similar sized plastic or glass enclosure. These skinks can be housed in pairs or in multiples in accordingly larger quarters, but males can become territorial and may fight. Provide these skinks with substrates that enable burrowing such as orchid bark, chemical free potting soil, or cypress mulch. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, branches, cork bark, or logs for ample basking, climbing, and hiding opportunities. Provide a small bowl or dish of fresh water as well, and be sure to clean and replace it at least two to three times weekly. Misting once to twice weekly will also help maintain the humidity at around 60 to 80% that these arboreal skinks require.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Ideal temperatures for these skinks range from 75 to 85 degrees F on the cool side and about 90 to 95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of emerald tree skinks in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to 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

Primarily Insectivorous; In the wild, emerald tree skinks are primarily insectivorous to partially frugivorous, meaning they will eat insects, and other invertebrates, as well as other small vertebrates on occasion, and fruits, vegetable, and other plant material. In captivity, feed emerald tree skinks a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, fruit fly cultures, or waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Emerald tree skinks also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Other feeder items, such as small, pre-killed rodents can also be given on occasion, but sparingly. Overall 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

Emerald tree skinks are a highly active species, and care should be taken if they are to be

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handled. They are usually not an aggressive or defensive species, but can be quite squirmy, and care should be taken to not accidentally drop or injure these animals when handling them. Overall, this is a species of skink that can be hardy and easily kept and cared for, but as far as handling, are better suited for display and viewing.

****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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