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Galliwasp Lizards (*Celestus sp.*) and (*Diploglossus sp.*)

Sleek and Slender Ground Dwellers

Galliwasp lizards are a group of anguillid lizards consisting of two genera, *Diploglossus* and *Celestus*, found across a wide range of the extreme southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, and into South America depending on the species. Galliwasp lizards can be quite variable in color, pattern, and appearance depending on the species, and can have a brown, yellowish, gray, to greenish-yellow or olive brown ground color with several (up to 9 to 13) faint, darker dorsal and lateral crossbands present. Some species may be quite colorful as well, with bright, vibrant red to orange bodies or sides, darker grayish to greenish-gray dorsals, and brightened yellow to golden colored heads. Galliwasp lizards also have somewhat thickened, elongated bodies with reduced limbs, flat, wedge shaped heads, keeled scales on the dorsum, sides, and legs, and distinct skin folds along their sides. These lizards also use their somewhat elongated bodies to move via lateral undulation through the substrate and vegetation. As with many other lizard species, these lizards can also drop their tails through caudal autotomy, which momentarily startles and/or distracts the potential predator long enough for the lizard to make an escape. A new tail regenerates after several weeks, although it is somewhat more vestigial than the original. Galliwasp lizards can be a pugnacious genera of lizards when disturbed, often hissing, gaping, and inflating their bodies to appear larger, and may also bite if more closely provoked. Nevertheless, these lizards can make for hardy and undemanding pet lizards with big personalities that are sure to not disappoint!

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Diploglossa

Family: Anguidae

Subfamily: Gerrhonotinae

Genus: *Diploglossus* and *Celestus*

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Species: *Diploglossus sp.** and *Celestus sp.**
**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, galliwasp lizards can attain potential longevity of at least 10 to 15 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

Depending on the genus and species, galliwasp lizards can occur from extreme southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, and into much of South America. Species of galliwasp lizards may be endemic to the island of Hispaniola (including the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Jamaica, Brazil, Colombia, the Caribbean and Lesser Antilles, and other surrounding countries and islands thereof. These primarily terrestrial, fossorial lizards are most often found amongst ground debris and leaf litter in forested or wooded areas within their ranges as well as adjacent suburban or agricultural areas.

Conservation Status

Conservation status is dependent upon the species. Some may be IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC), Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN), or Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Adult galliwasp lizards can vary in size depending on the species from 7 to 14 inches. Some species can reach larger sizes of up to 24 inches or slightly more.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling to juvenile galliwasp lizards can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult lizards require a minimum of a 20 to 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Hatchling and adult galliwasp lizards can be maintained on a loose substrate that is deep enough to allow for burrowing, and that can retain some levels of moisture and humidity, and can include sphagnum moss, sphagnum and fir mixtures, cypress mulch, orchid bark, or chemical free potting soil. Provide a large, shallow dish of clean water, and change and clean it every several days, or sooner if fouled. Misting them at least once to twice weekly with lukewarm water for 15 to 20 minutes can also help raise their hydration. Provide ample basking and hiding opportunities by providing artificial foliage, cork bark, driftwood, rocks, or logs.

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 lizards range from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side/ambient temperature and around 85 to 90 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop to 70 to 75 degrees F. 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. 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 these lizards 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

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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

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, galliwasp lizards are primarily insectivorous, meaning they will eat a variety of insects and other invertebrates. They may also eat eggs, and smaller vertebrates as well as small rodents, birds, or other reptiles.

In captivity, feed these lizards a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. They can also be given pre-killed rodents on occasion, but provide these sparingly. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Galliwasp lizards 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. 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

When first captured or handled, these lizards can be known to be quite pugnacious, and able to deliver a surprisingly strong bite. With regular time, handling, and interaction, however, these lizards can become quite tame and accustomed to being hand fed and short periods of handling, but are still not an overly hands on pet lizard genera. As with any animal though, care should be taken to avoid dropping or overly restraining them to prevent injury.

****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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