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Halmahera Giant Gecko (*Gehyra marginata*)

A “Poor Man’s Leachianus?”

Also occasionally known as the web toed geckos, “banana” geckos, and erroneously the “vorax” geckos, Halmahera giant geckos are a medium sized to large, arboreal gecko species indigenous to the island of Halmahera in Indonesia. True “vorax” geckos, which this species is often erroneously labeled as, are endemic only to the island of Fiji, where it receives strict protection, and is thus much rarer in captivity elsewhere. These medium to large geckos can vary in color from cream, to light brownish, olive or olive-brown, or yellowish-brown, sometimes with faint darker reticulate dorsal markings. As with many other geckos, the eyes are large and lidless, with dark vertical pupils, and have large, sickle shaped toe pads distinctly equipped with noticeable claws at their tips. Sometimes known as the “poor man’s leachianus”, the Halmahera geckos are often considered a unique alternative to other, more expensive and/or defensive gecko species prone to biting, and can make for excellent pet gecko species for the more intermediate level enthusiast.

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

Genus: Gehyra

Species: *Gehyra marginata**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Halmahera giant geckos can attain longevity of 15 to 20 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The Halmahera giant gecko is a relatively medium sized to large species of gecko indigenous to

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the Indonesian Islands, as well as New Guinea, and also into the Moluccas. Within this range, these Halmahera geckos occupy primarily arboreal to semi-arboreal environments, including tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, cliff areas, and rural to suburban residential areas, or other areas of human habitation, often along tree trunks or interior and exterior walls and other sidings of houses and other buildings.

Conservation Status

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

Legal and Regulatory Status(*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Halmahera geckos begin and average about 3 to 4 inches as hatchlings. They are among the largest gecko species in the world, and average from about 8 to 12 inches as adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof, and the size of the enclosure recommended will depend on the age and size of the gecko. For hatchlings up to 6 months or so, a 10 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 20 to 30 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used. Halmahera giant 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, and will be occasionally used.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Halmahera geckos have fairly simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). Ideal temperatures for these geckos range from 72 to 80 degrees F, or otherwise at room temperature. Do not keep them at over 85 degrees F or below 65 degrees F. Also be sure to provide a daily photoperiod or light cycle of at least 10 to 12 hours. 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

Omnivorous to Frugivorous; In the wild, Halmahera giant geckos are omnivorous to frugivorous, meaning they eat insects and various fruit and other plant matter. In captivity, many commercially available diets are available that contain most, if not all of the essential nutrients,

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vitamins, and minerals required for their optimal health and nutrition. These diets are quite simple to use and prepare for your animal(s) as instructed. Feeder crickets, or other small insects of appropriate size can also be given, 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

Although not as defensive and/or prone to biting as some other gecko species, Halmahera geckos can nonetheless be fast moving and somewhat skittish species which require intermediate to more experienced handling. If members of this genus are mishandled, they also have the potential to slough off portions of their fragile skin and scales as a defense mechanism in order to escape, which sometimes earn them the name of "zombie geckos" as well. Captive bred and born geckos, however, can become quite tame and handleable with unrestricted handling. Handle any of these geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. Take care to not grab your gecko by its tail or it may detach if your gecko perceives you as a predator or a threat. **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

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