



*Wally Kern/Supreme Gecko

Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharus macularius*)

Long-Running and Popular Beginner Geckos

Leopard geckos are a genus of small to medium sized, primarily nocturnal to crepuscular genus of geckos found in dry, rocky arid to semi-arid environments of the Middle East, Pakistan and other areas of southern and southeastern Asia. Unlike most other gecko species, leopard geckos are fairly small, terrestrial geckos lacking enlarged toe pads and have moveable eye lids. They can be further identified by their lumpy or warty yellowish skin, bead like scales and many black to chocolate brown spots, cross-banding, and blotches giving them the name “leopard” gecko. Cross-banding also has bluish to purplish bands across the back and tail that is more prominent in juveniles. As with several other species of geckos found elsewhere in the world, leopard geckos also have a thick fleshy tail that are used to store fat during prolonged dry periods. Their tails can also be lost through caudal autotomy as a means of startling and/or distracting predators long enough for the gecko to escape. Within several weeks to months, a new tail will then regrow, but will remain somewhat more vestigial and limited in function. As with many other geckos, leopard geckos are also able to vocalize by creating squeaking or clicking sounds when they are defensive, handled, or become territorial. Leopard geckos are docile and undemanding pets with a few basic husbandry requirements, making them among the most widely kept and sold reptile pets.

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: Eublepharinae

Genus: Eublepharis

Species: *Eublepharis macularius**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, leopard geckos can attain longevity of 10 to 12 years or more as pets.

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Distribution and Habitat

Leopard geckos are nocturnal, and inhabit south central Asia from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan, to northwestern India. Within this range, they can be found in arid to semi-arid desert, scrubland, and grasslands, to open savannahs.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Leopard geckos range from about 3 ½ to 4 ½ inches as hatchlings, and 8 to 10 inches as adults. Some bloodlines can become slightly larger as well.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling leopard geckos can be housed in a 5 to 10 gallon or similar sized terrarium or enclosure, while adults will require at least a 10 to 20 gallon long enclosure. These active, nocturnal to crepuscular geckos are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that holds humidity reasonably well but is not readily ingestible such as cage liner or reptile carpets, play sand mixtures, crushed walnut shells, or natural bark substrates. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. A humid hide can also be provided for additional humidity. For moisture, provide a small bowl or dish of fresh water two to three times per week and mist once to twice weekly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a thermal gradient, or a warm side to the enclosure, and maintain these geckos at ideal temperatures ranging from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and ambient temperatures, and 88 to 90 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Leopard geckos are primarily crepuscular to nocturnal, 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). 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; In the wild, leopard geckos are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. In captivity, feed leopard geckos a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Leopard geckos 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

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Handling

Many leopard geckos are generally tolerant of moderate levels of handling and interaction even as juveniles. Handle your gecko gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Do not grab your gecko by its tail or it may detach if they perceive you as a predator or threat. Most adult leopard geckos will settle down considerably and become quite docile and easily handled. Allow them to walk in between or from hand to hand.

****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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