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Painted Agama/Stellion Agama (*Stellagama stellio*)

Colorful Painted Dragons

Painted agamas are small to mid-sized agamid lizards with other common names that can include, but are not limited to the painted dragon, clown agama, stellion, star lizard, starred agama, and rough-tailed rock agama. They can be quite variable in color and appearance depending on their subspecies and locality. However, painted agamas generally can range in color from gray, brown, or blackish or tan with bluish/purplish, to yellow, orange, white, and pinkish spots, hue, and/or banding present. These agamids also possess some degree of color changing ability, depending on their current mood, disposition, and/or reproductive status. They are also frequent baskers, and can often be observed during the peak or heat of the day basking in rocky areas, where they will quickly retreat into rocky crevices or underground burrows if disturbed or approached too closely. Painted agamas are an active, primarily diurnal species that are believed to be within a species complex of at least seven (7) subspecies.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Iguania

Family: Agamidae

Genus: *Stellagama*

Species: *Stellagama stellio**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, painted agamas can attain longevity of at least 10 to 15 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Painted agamas are a medium sized agama species belonging to a monotypic genus of agamid lizards (*Stellagama*) widely ranging over much of the rocky, arid to semi-arid deserts, grasslands, scrubland, and savannahs of southwestern Asia, through much of southern Europe, including

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Greece and Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, to northern Africa, including Saudi Arabia and northern Egypt.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Painted agamas range from about 3 ½ to 5 inches as hatchlings, and roughly 10 to 15 inches or slightly larger as adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling painted dragons can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult painted dragons require a minimum of a 20 to 30 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Hatchling and adult painted dragons can be maintained on a substrate of cage carpet or terrarium liner, or ground walnut shell substrates. Avoid using substrates made from reptile bark that result in environments that are too humid. Provide a small dish of clean water, and change and clean it every several days, or sooner if fouled. Soaking them at least once weekly in lukewarm water for 15 to 20 minutes can also help raise their hydration. Provide ample basking and hiding opportunities by providing artificial foliage, 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 painted dragons range from 70 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and around 95 to 112 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop from 65 to 75 degrees F. 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 painted agamas 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

Omnivorous; As with most agamids, painted dragons are omnivorous, meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter. They will eat a variety of insects and other invertebrates, as well as fruit and vegetable matter. In captivity, feed painted dragons mostly a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. They can also be given a mixed assortment of chopped up vegetables including carrots, peas, collard, mustard, and dandelion greens, and beans. Several commercially available omnivore mix diets are also available. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Painted dragons 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

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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

As with many reptiles, hatchling and juvenile painted dragons typically tend to be initially more nervous and defensive than adults. Handle your painted dragon gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Although painted agamas are generally not aggressive or defensive towards handling, they can be initially skittish. However, with regular handling and interaction, they can become quite tame and make for good pets.

****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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