

GECKOS INFO SHEET

With over 1,500 different species distributed across tropical, sub-tropical and warm temperate regions of the world, geckos are one of the most diverse groups of all reptiles.

Geckos occur in a rainbow of colours and vary massively in size; the smallest species is just 1.6 cm long when mature while the largest reaches sizes of 36 cm!

Many gecko species can change colour, often turning lighter shades at night. Some geckos have evolved incredible forms of camouflage. The leaf-tailed geckos from Madagascar have perhaps the best camouflage adaptations of all. Several species have bodies with flaps and flanges along their flanks that resemble moss and bark, while the satanic leaf-tailed gecko, *Uroplatus phantasticus*, even has bite marks in its tail to resemble a chewed leaf!

Geckos have many amazing traits. If attacked, many geckos can shed their tail to distract their enemy, and some gecko species can regrow their tails later. Most geckos have adhesive pads on their toes that allow them to scale virtually any surface, even glass! Geckos are among the few reptiles to vocalise, with many geckos making chirping sounds to attract mates. Some geckos can reproduce even without mating!

Image 1: The crested gecko, *Correlophus ciliatus*;

Image 2: A lined day gecko, *Phelsuma lineata*;

Image 3: A leopard gecko, *Eublepharis macularius*.



How to keep a Gecko

The following is a brief summary and does not include all of the information required to look after these exquisite creatures. If you are interested in keeping a gecko, please refer to the gecko chapter in the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Many species of geckos are easy to keep and make wonderful pets. The leopard gecko is one of the easiest to rear, and details for that species are included here. For other gecko species, please refer to the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

To keep a pair of leopard geckos, select an enclosure that is at least 50 cm long, 30 cm wide and 30 cm tall. Fish tanks made of glass or plastic work well, as do reptile vivariums. Make sure that the enclosure has a tight-fitting lid as geckos are talented escape artists! The bigger the enclosure, the more room your geckos will have to move around.

Leopard geckos originate from deserts and tropical grasslands. They therefore require temperatures of 29–32 °C during the day and slightly less at night. Heating can easily be achieved by using a dedicated heat pad. Ensure that the pad covers no more than one third of the tank and that it is thermostatically controlled. Providing an unheated section of the tank is essential to allow your geckos to cool off when they wish to.

Add sheets of newspaper or pet-grade pea gravel or reptile turf (available at your local pet store) as a floor covering in the enclosure. Leopard geckos designate a “bathroom area” (usually a corner of their tank), which makes cleaning easy.

Add pieces of sterilised driftwood, cork bark, sticks and branches to give your leopard gecko furniture to climb on. Consider adding a reptile shelter for your gecko to hide in.

Lastly, provide a bowl of chlorine-free drinking water and change it regularly. Feed your gecko live food (mealworms or crickets from pet shops). Mealworms often work best and can be served in a small dish. An adult leopard gecko requires eight mealworms 3 or 4 times a week. To maintain health, dust prey with commercial reptile minerals and vitamins prior to feeding.

For more information, see the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Image 4: The leopard gecko, *Eublepharis macularius*;
Image 5: A crested gecko feeding fruit mix, *Correlophus ciliatus*;
Image 6: The satanic leaf-tailed gecko, *Uroplatus phantasticus*.



LEOPARD GECKOS INFO SHEET

Buy the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book to discover the biology, ecology, diversity and how to keep geckos.

To order your copy visit:
www.weirdandwonderfulpets.com

