

Henkel's Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus henkeli

Reptile

Scientific Name

Uroplatus henkeli

Other Names

Flat-tailed gecko

Range

Northern Madagascar and the nearby island of Nosy Bé.

Habitat

Rainforest

Average Size

Length: 12 in.

Weight: 10 – 30 g.

Description

A large gecko with a triangular head, slender limbs and flaps of skin around the edges of the head and body. The tail is long, broad and flat. Overall color ranges from olive green to brown or gray, with the underside a creamy white.

Lifespan

In the wild: Unknown

In captivity: 2 – 9 years

Diet

In the wild: Insects and other invertebrates

In captivity: Insects and other invertebrates

Incubation Period

76 – 84 days

Clutch Size

2 eggs, up to three times per year

Sexual Maturity

1 year, in captivity

Predators

Birds of prey, fossa, snakes and humans

Population Status

Vulnerable



Behavior

This solitary species of gecko is mostly nocturnal, spending the day resting head-downwards on a tree trunk utilizing its leaf like camouflage for safety. Leaf-tailed geckos live an arboreal (up in the trees) lifestyle, venturing neither too high in the canopy or down to the ground. The only exception is for egg laying, when females descend to the ground.

The small flaps of skin along its body are used to help break up the outline of the gecko and make it more difficult for predators to spot. In addition, when they are threatened they emit a loud, screeching sound that is meant to frighten the attacker. Like many lizards, this gecko can release its tail if caught, distracting the predator and giving them time to make their escape. The tail will grow back after a few months.

Reproduction and Breeding

Not a lot is known about the reproduction or mating habits of this species in the wild. From what scientists have observed, the eggs are laid in soft soil or leaf litter one to five days after a shed. The eggs are then covered by the female, who provides no defense to the nest area or parental care to the young. Although they are not considered territorial, the female will often reuse the same nesting site for subsequent clutches. At hatch time, the young measure only two inches in length, and must quickly head up to the trees for safety.

In recent years, with increased knowledge of humidity, temperature and incubation procedures, captive births have become more successful in zoos across the nation.

Conservation

The Henkel's leaf-tailed gecko is locally protected, and its rain forest habitat is endangered. Because they live on a relatively small island, they are vulnerable to a wide variety of conservation issues. In addition to collection for the pet trade, use of pesticides for agriculture and an increase human population have tainted the habitat necessary for their survival.

The Sacramento Zoo participates in a variety of conservation programs aimed at assisting people with co-existing alongside their native wildlife, both domestically and internationally. The Madagascar Fauna Group is just one of these groups. For more information, please go to savethemur.org.



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Amazing Facts

Members of this genus of lizard have the most teeth of all reptiles or mammals.

Tiny pads on the feet of the Henkel's leaf-tailed gecko produce a strong adhesive effect, enabling the species to climb and cling to a variety of surfaces.

This gecko gets its name from the leaf-like tail it uses to camouflage itself. There are an estimated nine types of leaf-tailed gecko.

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