

Madagascar Giant Day Gecko

Phelsuma madagascariensis grandis

Reptile

Scientific Name

Phelsuma madagascariensis grandis

Other Names

None

Range

Eastern Madagascar

Habitat

Rainforest

Average Size

Length: 8 – 9 inches

Weight: 60 – 70 grams

Description

A small, mostly green gecko with red to reddish-brown spots on the body and a reddish-brown stripe from the nose to the eye. The underside is grey.

Diet

In the wild: Insects, nectar

In human care: Insects

Lifespan

In the wild: Estimated at 10 to 15 years

In human care: Up to 15 years

Incubation

60 – 65 days

Clutch Size

Six sets of two each year

Sexual Maturity

1 year of age

Predators

Snakes, birds of prey and small carnivores

Population Status

Vulnerable



Behavior

As the name suggests, this lizard is diurnal (active in daytime). Males are highly territorial throughout the year, not just during breeding season, and will actively fight other males that enter their territory. They are also arboreal (live in the trees) and rarely, if ever, venture to the ground, spending their days basking in the sun and hunting for insects. They move easily through the trees using flattened toe pads that are covered on the bottom with dead, keratinized scales called lamellae. The lamellae scale surface is made up of long hair-like structures called setae, with each setae being divided and subdivided along its length. Because of these setae, these day geckos are capable of climbing up almost any surface including glass.

Reproduction and Breeding

The wild breeding season for this day gecko is in fall and early summer, generally November through March. After a brief courtship and mating, where males aggressively fight for access to mates in the area, females lay one to two eggs every four to six weeks. The hatchlings are yellowish-green and are ready and able to fend for themselves as neither adult provides parental care. The new hatchlings may remain in the same area for a few weeks to months before venturing out into the forest.

Conservation

Although this is a locally common species, especially in the northern part of its range, the population is experiencing a decline at higher elevations, where it is restricted to humid forests that are under pressure from human encroachment. Fortunately, research has shown that this species is tolerant of moderate habitat modification and can be abundant in orchards and agricultural areas.

The Madagascar day gecko is listed on Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species) providing some regulation in collection for the pet trade which is a common threat to reptile species worldwide.



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Amazing Facts

This is one of the largest day geckos and the largest of this genus in Madagascar.

Geckos are the only lizards that can produce more than a hiss or other simple sounds. Their vocalizations range from squeaks and clicks to barks and croaks.

Madagascar day geckos have a clear, fixed plate covering their eyes and do not have eyelids.

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