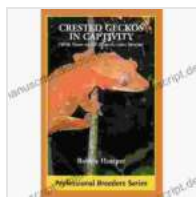


Crested Geckos In Captivity: A Comprehensive Guide for Herpetoculture Enthusiasts

Crested geckos (*Correlophus ciliatus*) are captivating reptiles native to the rainforests of New Caledonia. With their distinctive "punk-rock" appearance, featuring a spiky crest running down their backs and large, expressive eyes, these charismatic lizards have gained immense popularity among herpetoculture enthusiasts. Their adaptability to captivity, docile nature, and relatively low maintenance requirements make them ideal pets for both experienced and novice reptile keepers alike.

Natural History and Distribution

Crested geckos are arboreal, meaning they spend the majority of their time in trees and shrubs. In their natural habitat, they inhabit tropical forests characterized by high humidity, warm temperatures, and abundant vegetation. Their distribution spans the islands of Grande Terre, Lifou, and Maré within the archipelago of New Caledonia.



Crested Geckos in Captivity by Marty Greer

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Physical Characteristics

Crested geckos are relatively small lizards, with adults typically ranging from 6 to 8 inches in length. Their most notable feature is the row of fleshy, triangular projections that runs down the center of their backs, known as a crest. This crest serves as a form of communication, with the geckos raising and lowering it to convey their mood or intentions.

Crested geckos also possess large, wide-set eyes that give them excellent binocular vision for hunting insects. Their coloration varies from vibrant shades of green to muted browns, with some individuals exhibiting patterns or markings.

Behavior and Temperament

Crested geckos are generally gentle and docile in captivity. Their nocturnal habits and secretive nature make them ideal pets for those who prefer to observe their animals rather than handle them frequently. However, they are also known for their curious and inquisitive personalities, and will often approach their keepers when they are noticed.

In the wild, crested geckos are territorial and may exhibit aggression towards other individuals of the same sex. In captivity, however, they can be successfully housed in pairs or small groups, provided that they are properly introduced and the enclosure is large enough to accommodate their needs.

Housing and Enclosure Requirements

When it comes to housing crested geckos in captivity, it is essential to provide them with an environment that mimics their natural habitat as closely as possible. This includes maintaining appropriate humidity, temperature, and enclosure size.

Enclosure Size

The minimum enclosure size for a single crested gecko is an 18x18x24 inch (45x45x60 cm) terrarium. However, larger enclosures are always recommended, as they provide more space for exploration and climbing.

Humidity

Crested geckos require a relatively high humidity level of around 60-80%. This can be achieved by using a humidifier, misting the enclosure regularly, or providing a large water bowl.

Temperature

The ideal temperature gradient for crested geckos is 75-85°F (24-29°C) with a basking spot reaching up to 90°F (32°C). This can be achieved using a heat lamp or under-tank heater.

Substrate

A variety of substrates can be used for crested geckos, including coconut fibers, bioactive soil, or paper towels. It is important to choose a substrate that retains moisture well and is not prone to molding.

Decorations

Crested geckos appreciate having plenty of places to climb and hide in their enclosure. This can be provided by adding branches, live plants, and artificial shelters. Live plants also help to maintain humidity levels.

Diet and Nutrition

Crested geckos are insectivores, primarily feeding on crickets, mealworms, and dubia roaches. They can also be offered occasional treats such as fruit or baby food.

It is important to dust live insects with a calcium supplement to ensure that the geckos are getting the vitamins and minerals they need.

Health and Veterinary Care

Crested geckos are generally hardy reptiles, but like all animals, they can be susceptible to certain health issues. Some of the most common health problems in crested geckos include:

* Metabolic bone disease * Impaction * Respiratory infections * Parasites

Regular veterinary check-ups are essential to ensure that your crested gecko is healthy.

Breeding Crested Geckos

Crested geckos can be bred in captivity, but it is important to do so responsibly and with the best interests of the animals in mind.

Breeding should only be attempted by experienced herpetoculture enthusiasts who have the necessary knowledge and resources to care for the animals properly.

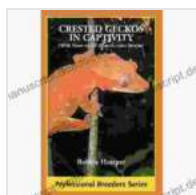
Conservation and Ethical Considerations

Crested geckos are still relatively common in the wild, but their populations are threatened by habitat loss and illegal collection for the pet trade.

It is important to only purchase crested geckos from reputable breeders who are committed to ethical practices and the conservation of the species.

Crested geckos are fascinating and rewarding reptiles that can make excellent pets for herpetoculture enthusiasts of all levels. By providing them with the proper care and environment, you can ensure that your crested gecko lives a long and healthy life.

Whether you are a seasoned reptile keeper or just starting out, I encourage you to consider a crested gecko as your next scaly companion. Their unique appearance, docile nature, and relative ease of care make them an ideal choice for anyone interested in the wonderful world of reptiles.



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