

Keeping of carpet chameleon (*Furcifer lateralis* Gray, 1831) at BION Terrarium Center

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Carpet chameleon, or Jeweled chameleon (*Furcifer lateralis* Gray, 1831), is one of numerous Madagascar endemic species. It inhabits large territories of the island, excepting the North and Northwestern regions (Fig. 1), and can be found at a variety of elevations, from sea-level to 2,000 meters above sea level (Glaw, Vences, 2007).



Figure 1. *F. lateralis* physical appearance and distribution range.

F. lateralis is extremely adaptable and is not much affected by human habitation the way that many other species are. It prefers humid forests, but can also be found in dryer areas, and around human modified landscapes. Though it is considered a forest edge species that is associated with herbaceous vegetation and shrubby grasslands, it has also been recorded inside forest and in altered habitats (Glaw, Vences, 2007; Necas, 2004).

Carpet chameleons can reach a maximum total length of 17-20 cm, including tail. The males are usually larger, they have green coloration with bright pattern, including bands of white, yellow and orange. Females are smaller and have a wider range of colors. Both sexes have striped throats and lips. As most of Chameleon species, individuals change their color depending on physiological and environmental factors (Fig. 1). These chameleons are diurnal, insectivorous, rather active and sociable (Glaw, Vences, 2007; Necas, 2004).

F. lateralis has a large estimated distribution of more than 130,000km². This species is listed on Appendix II of CITES. Catching is restricted to an export quota of 2,000 specimens a year, and there is no distinction made between the subspecies.

Keeping and breeding requirements

Enclosure. We keep adult animals separately at the well-ventilated cages 60*60*60 cm (24*24*24 in) made from metal wire all year round, and place them in couples only for mating. We use paper sheets as substrate in order to control defecation and presence of uneaten insects, or nothing at all. Decoration includes tree branches, living/artificial plants. Feeding dish should be fixed nearby the middle of terrarium height. Water bowl is not necessarily needed.

Lighting. Full spectrum lamp is necessary for all age individuals. Day length is usually 12 hours, and only 10 hours in winter season.

Temperature. Temperature should be about +22 - +24 °C (71.6 - 75.2 F) at night and +25 - +28 °C (77.0 - 82.4 F) during daytime, without spot lamps.

Humidity. Humidity should be 50-60% for adults, which is achieved by spraying with warm water 1-2 times a day.

Diet. Adult individuals are fed with different insects (crickets, cockroaches, locusts etc.) 2-3 times per week (5-6 pieces for each chameleon). We give Calcium powder by dusting food items with it once per 10 days for our adult group, and we use vitamins (Repashy) once a week.

References

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