

Keeping of Guenther's leaf-tailed gecko (*Uroplatus guentheri* Mocquard, 1908) at BION Terrarium Center

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Günther's leaf-tail Gecko (*Uroplatus guentheri*, Mocquard, 1908) is a medium-sized species of the *Uroplatus* genus. Adult specimens' average SVL is 70–95 mm (2.75-3.74 in), TL is 30–55 mm (1.18-2.16 in) (total length 100–150 mm (3.94-5.90 in). Total length of hatchlings is about 50 mm (1.96 in). The large head ends with a blunt, rounded snout. 16–19 supralabial scales are present, rostral scale is divided. The cylindrical body is rather flattened and lacks dermal fringe flaps (Angel, 1942).



Figure 1. *Uroplatus guentheri* female and male. Main distinguishing features are shown.

Small conical scales are scattered all over the dorsal surfaces. The basic coloration is beige to grayish brown with a fine vertebral line running from the back of the head to the tip of the tail with some irregular dark cross-bands. Ventral surfaces of the body and limbs are plain white. This species possesses deep armpit pockets. Original tail shows a slightly serrated fringe. Males can be easily sexed by the presence of well-seen hemipenial bulges (Fig. 1) (Svatek, van Duin, 2001; Gehring, 2020).

Uroplatus guentheri inhabit patches of dry deciduous forests of western and north western Madagascar (Fig. 2). It has been found roosting in shrubs and low trees of up to 5 meters height (<http://uroplatus.info/uroplatus-guentheri>).



Figure 2. *Uroplatus guentheri* registration points within natural range.

When working with this animal one should keep in mind that they are nervous and very fast. You should always keep an eye on them as they can escape from the terrarium. They have a tendency to autotomize their tails if irritated more often than other species of the genus. Due to mass deforestation and destroying of their natural habitat they have IUCN Status indicated as “Endangered” (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/172927/6943019>). The species is also listed in CITES Ap. II. Therefore development of breeding methods and creation of ex situ populations for this species is extremely important (Dubyna et al., 2019).

Keeping and breeding requirements

We keep this species at terrariums of 45*45*60 cm (17,1*17,1*23,6 in) for adults, and at terrariums of not less than 30*30*30 cm (11,8*11,8*11,8 in) for babies. The decoration of the terrarium includes horizontal and vertical branches of medium thickness, lianas, layers of bark for climbing, hollows, living plants and shards as shelters (Fig. 3). Substrate — crushed bark, covered with dry oak leaves. Paper towel with a box of wet coconut substrate as moist chamber is also an option. Water dish is obligatory.

Lighting. Zoo Med 5 UVB lamp is used during breeding season for 10-14 hours per day; during resting period (December – Feb) for 4 hours per day.

Temperature. Daytime temperature is +24 - +25 °C (75.2 - 77.0 F), at night +19 - +20 °C (66.2 - 68.0 F); at the time of winter dormancy +16 - +20 °C (60.8 - 68.0 F). 40W incandescent lamp is used as both lighting and heating source.



Figure 3. Inner decoration of the terrarium for *U. guentheri* pair.

Humidity. Humidity level is maintained at 60–80% with double spraying (morning and evening) during the day.

Diet. The diet for adults consists of Turkestan cockroaches (*Shelfordella tartara*), snout moths and crickets of appropriate size. It is strictly recommended not to use wild caught insects. We offer 1–2 insects to each lizard 1–2 times per week. If the animal shows signs of obesity, the frequency of feeding is reduced to 1 time per 2 weeks. There is always a bowl with fresh drinking water in the terrarium. If an animal is still hungry, we can offer one or two additional feeding items. We offer soft-shelled snails for females during ovogenesis. All insects should be gut loaded and dusted with vitamin-mineral supplementation every other feeding. Sepia or cuttlefish “bone” powder works well as a source of calcium. Sometimes if an animal is still hungry, we can offer one or two additional feeding items. We gutload the insects with fruit, greens and vegetables and sometimes bee pollen as an additional source of vitamins and bioactive elements.

Diet of juveniles is the same as for adults, but the insects should be of appropriate size. Frequency of feeding: 2-3 insects per 1 young gecko 3 times per week. We add mineral supplements "Repashy" with D3 with every second feeding.

References

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