



Frog-Eyed Geckos

Teratoscincus scincus

INTERMEDIATE · 5-7 IN ADULT · 10-15 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · CENTRAL ASIA

There's a gecko that rustles. Frog-eyed geckos are covered in big overlapping scales that look and sound like a fish's, and those scales come with a warning: the skin under them tears at the slightest rough handling. They're desert animals from Central Asia, out at night, digging burrows in deep dry sand. Fascinating to watch, genuinely fragile to keep. This is a display animal, not a handling animal.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Intermediate
Ambient day/night	80-88 °F / 68-74 °F
Basking spot	95-100 °F
Humidity	20-40 %
UVB	Low, beneficial
Diet	Crickets, mealworms, beetles
Feeding cadence	Every 2-3 days
Adult size	5-7 inches
Lifespan	10-15 years



Every frog-eyed gecko wears the same big, overlapping, fish-like scales. Captive-bred animals turn up at NARBC specialty tables.

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01

Fish Scales, Fragile Skin

Those scales are not armor. They're large, overlapping and plate-like, closer to a fish's than a lizard's, and the skin beneath them is thin enough to tear under a firm grip. Restrain one, or let one thrash in your hand, and you can strip a patch away, leaving an open wound on a desert animal. **Handle these geckos only when you must, and never grip: cup and support instead.** That fragility, not their heat or diet, is what makes this an intermediate species rather than a beginner one.

02

Room to Dig

Think floor plan, not climbing wall. These are terrestrial diggers, so horizontal space is the priority at every size, from a 12×12×12 hatchling tub up to 36×18×18 for an adult. Height matters far less than footprint. An adult wants six inches of substrate or more, deep enough to hold a burrow that won't collapse, and racks work only where that depth fits. House them singly, too. Adults squabble, and a scuffle between geckos this delicate ends in torn skin.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	12×12×12	16×12×12	Fragile skin sheds in large patches; deep packed sand mix from day one.
Juvenile	20×12×12	24×18×12	Dry heat with one slightly humid retreat. Nocturnal; expect night activity.
Subadult	24×18×12	30×18×18	Handle rarely and with caution: the skin tears easily.
Adult	30×18×18	36×18×18	Needs 6+ inches of substrate. Seasonal cooling supports long-term health.

Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space beats height at every stage; racks work only with real substrate depth.

03

Heat, Night Drop, and a Little UVB

Run a gradient: 80–88 °F ambient, a basking surface at 95–100 °F, and the enclosure falling to 68–74 °F overnight. That night drop isn't a nicety, it's the desert they come from, and holding a cage at daytime heat all night is a common mistake. Heat from overhead, never with an in-cage heat rock; those cause deep belly burns, and a burrowing gecko is the animal that ends up lying on one. Low UVB is beneficial rather than essential, so a low-output lamp on a day cycle is plenty.

04

Dry Air, One Damp Corner

Target 20–40 % humidity and mean it. This is arid-country air, and a wet enclosure is how frog-eyed geckos end up with respiratory and skin infections. Ventilate well and let the surface substrate dry out. The burrow is the exception: slightly damp sand at depth is where they shed, so keep one corner a shade moister than the rest. A shallow water dish stays in year-round, changed daily, and there's no misting schedule to keep beyond the odd light spray.

05

Sand That Holds a Tunnel

A sand and topsoil mix is the substrate that works. Packed slightly damp and left to set, it holds a tunnel; pure loose sand slumps into the burrow behind them. Loose sand is also the wrong call for hatchlings, who swallow mouthfuls chasing prey, so feed young geckos on a dish or a bare tile. Add flat rock, cork bark and a couple of low hides at ground level, and skip the climbing branches. Almost everything they do happens on or under the floor.

06

Feeding

Insects, and not much else: crickets, mealworms and beetles, offered every two to three days. Keep prey small, no wider than the space between the gecko's eyes, since an adult tops out at 5–7 inches. Dust with calcium on most feedings and a multivitamin weekly. They hunt at night, so feed in the evening and pull uneaten insects before morning. Crickets left in the dark chew on sleeping geckos, and this is the last skin that can afford it.

07

Health Red Flags

Watch the tail first. On a healthy frog-eyed gecko it's plump, and a thin tail means the animal is running on empty. Then watch the shed. It comes off in big patches, and anything stuck around the toes or eyes calls for a damp hide, never tweezers. Sunken eyes, a gecko out and sluggish in daylight, weight loss across consecutive weeks, or any open wound on that fragile skin: see a reptile vet.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.