

CREATURE CARE SHEET

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Flying Gecko

Ptychozoon kuhli

Description:

Ptychozoon kuhli (pronounced Tie - coe – zoon Cool- eye) is the species of Flying Gecko most commonly available in the UK. They average 8 inches in total length. The colors are variable, ranging from browns to grays. The patterns can be very intricate and bark like. Frequently the pattern is wavy bands of dark brown outlined on a tan background. A lighter tan dorsal stripe is present on some specimens. A flap of skin extends down both flanks with narrower frills at the sides of the head. There is extensive webbing between the digits. The deeply serrated tail is an extraordinary feature.

Once acclimated these geckos are hardy captives. There are six species within the genus *Ptychozoon* but only one other, *P. lionotum* is ever imported and its care is identical to that described here.

Distribution:

This species is widespread in Southeast Asia, ranging from the Malayan Peninsula, through Sumatra and Java to Borneo and adjacent islands. At one point in the recent past it was said that nearly all the *P. kuhli* exported to the US came from one region in central Java. These animals were taken from plantations.

Natural History:

Animals that can fly have always inspired the human imagination. While true flight, the ability to fly self powered completely at will, is restricted to birds, bats and insects, a few animals have perfected the ability to glide impressive distances. We all know about flying squirrels, and flying fish, but few know about this remarkable gecko. Many geckos have developed camouflage patterns, tail dropping and superior climbing abilities as methods of self-preservation. Geckos of the genus *Ptychozoon* have taken the art of escape to the air. While roosting in trees a *Ptychozoon* can leap and glide. Landing can be on a nearby tree or they can parachute safely to the ground. Their colors blend well with tree bark, enabling these geckos to remain hidden upon landing. The gliding flaps also break up the animal's outline, to aid in the blending.

Housing in Captivity:

A rainforest terrarium is required for housing. This can be an aquarium with a screen lid. The minimum size should be a 90 litre, taller than wide aquarium for a breeding pair or trio as these geckos are very active. Screen cages work very well, provided care is taken to ensure humidity levels are kept high enough. Commercially manufactured plastic cages are also good. The track channels for the sliding glass can offer good hiding places for these geckos. You will need to inspect these areas before opening the doors.

Live plants help keep humidity levels high and allow for a visually attractive terrarium. Vertical slabs of cork bark glued to the back and side walls will give adequate roosting sites and the geckos will feel secure. Full spectrum lighting may be beneficial as *Ptychozoon kuhli* rest during the day on the bark in the open. In the wild they would receive some direct sun and may benefit from the UVB exposure. Sterile soil mixed with equal parts of peat moss and

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sand makes a suitable substrate. Plants may be directly placed in this soil mix. Pothos, Monstera, small ferns and Sansevieria all make excellent additions. Placing the terrarium in an area with adequate ventilation is important, as in a "stagnant" humid environment fungus and bacteria can proliferate.

Temperatures should be in the 27-30C range. during the day with a night time drop to the low 20's C. Misting the plant leaves and terrarium sides in the evenings will provide water for drinking and for raising humidity.

Food and Feeding:

Flying Geckos are insectivores and will accept small crickets, locusts waxworms and other suitably sized insects. Sufficient quantities that can be eaten speedily can be let loose in the tank to be hunted down. Dusting the insects with a proprietary calcium/vitamin mixture is recommended. Fruit baby food will also be accepted.

Health:

Imports are frequently dehydrated and plagued with red mites. The skin flaps that make this gecko so unique also allows mites to congregate in large numbers. When inspecting a prospective purchase, carefully lift all flaps of skin looking for tiny red specks. These mites must be removed before introduction to a terrarium. They can be safely removed using a cotton swab dipped in vegetable oil dabbed directly onto the mite. This suffocates the mite, allowing them to be wiped off easily. Soapy warm water can be used to wash away any oil residue. Quarantine all geckos for several weeks to watch for fresh outbreaks. Small mites can be missed and several may use the ear opening as a hiding place. When handling for inspection and for mite removal be very careful, as these small geckos can be easily injured. Hold gently, but firmly, as they will readily bite when handled. The bites are inconsequential and rarely break the skin.

Other things to look for in imported animals are injuries, such as to the mouth area and also respiratory infections. A fecal examination by a vet is recommended as internal parasites are common. Proper treatment to counter these can be the key to acclimating imports to captivity. Regrown tails are common with wild caught animals. The re-grown tail will have a continuous flap around the entire re-growth, rather than the small, serrated flaps of the original tail. A re-grown tail is reminiscent of a Uroplatus tail, resembling a slender leaf.

Breeding:

Breeding will only occur when the temperature and humidity is adequate. It is common for these geckos to lay eggs when newly imported, but to stop breeding soon afterwards.

Breeding can be stimulated by removing the male from the group and reintroducing him several days later. Eggs are usually glued to the terrarium walls under shelter. Beneath a cluster of leaf cover is a common site, as is under cork bark.

Incubation time can range from 60-120 days. Hatchlings are perfect replicas of the adults and should be reared individually in a small terrarium. Plastic gallon jars modified with screen lids work well. In each jar place a substrate of soil with a small Pothos sprig and a piece of cork bark angled at 90 degrees. Juveniles can be kept this way until they can be sexed. These geckos mature at about one year of age and males can be identified by the presence of a hemipenal bulge at the tail base and the enlarged femoral pores. Only keep one male per terrarium, as they will fight.

Difficulty Rating:

2 – Some Previous Gecko-Keeping Experience Required

Recommended Reading:

Brown, R.M., Ferner, J.W. & A.C. Diesmos. 1997. Definition of the Philippine Parachute Gecko, *Ptychozoon intermedium* Taylor 1915 (Reptilia: Squamata: Gekkonidae):

Redescription, Designation of a Neotype, and Comparisons with Related Species. *Herpetologica*, 53(3), 1997, 357-373

Coborn, J. 1995. *Breeding and Keeping Geckos*. T.F.H. Publications, Neptune City, NJ, USA