



Care Guide

Tribolonotus gracilis
**Red Eyed
Crocodile Skink**



Shy, prehistoric pets.

A relatively small skink with a prehistoric appearance, the red-eyed crocodile skink is easy to care for for experienced reptile parents. While they are not incredibly active, their elusive nature and marvelous appearance are sure to inspire any reptile enthusiast fortunate enough to observe them. They do best in warm, humid, bioactive enclosures. If you are looking to add a little dinosaur to your latest terrarium build, give the red-eyed crocodile skink a try!

Lifespan

With proper care, these skinks have an average lifespan of 6-10+ years.

Size

Hatchlings measure 6-8 cm. Adults measure 6-10 inches, snout to tail. Juveniles have the same body type and skin as adults but differ in their eye and head coloration. The head of a juvenile will be cream colored and will lack the distinctive orange/red around their eyes. At around 6 months of age, the cream color will disappear, and they will develop the orange/red around their eyes.

These skinks do not reach sexual maturity until 3-4 years of age, and as they mature, they develop an orange colored throat. The male is often larger than the female, but that is not always the best indicator of sex. Males have gray-blue raised pores on the underside of the third and fourth toes of their hind feet. Males also have a rectangular section of four to six enlarged belly scales at the umbilicus.

Natural History

There are eight known species in the genus *Tribolonotus*, which are all extant to Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea in the Solomon Islands. It derives part of its common name, the “crocodile skink,” from its four rows of dorsal, backward-curved keeled scales which resemble those on a crocodile’s back. Red-eyed crocodile skinks are shy, crepuscular animals which are most active during dawn and dusk. When threatened or defending offspring, these skinks will often vocalize in distress, play dead, or drop their tails.

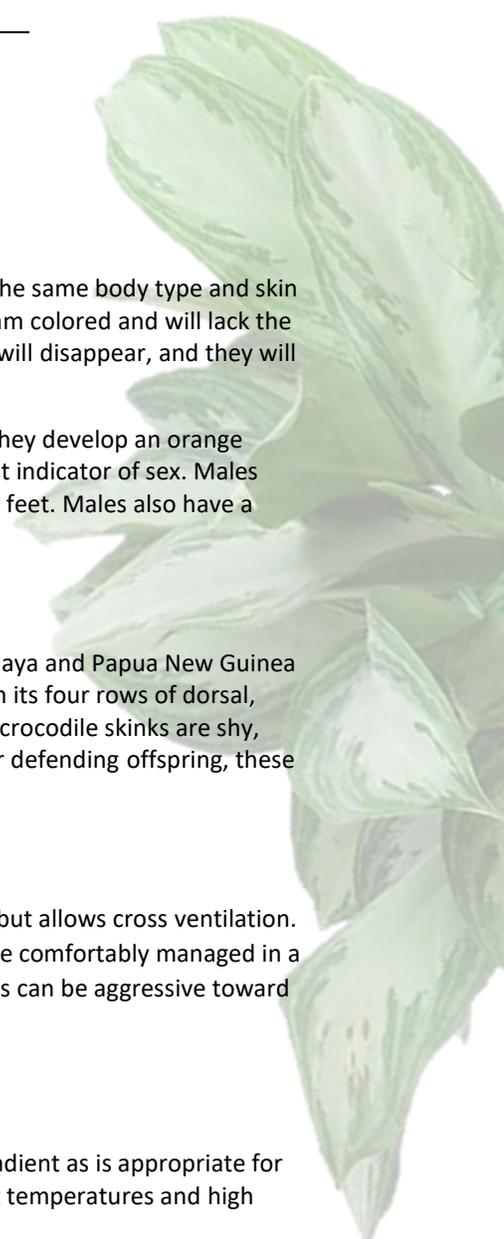
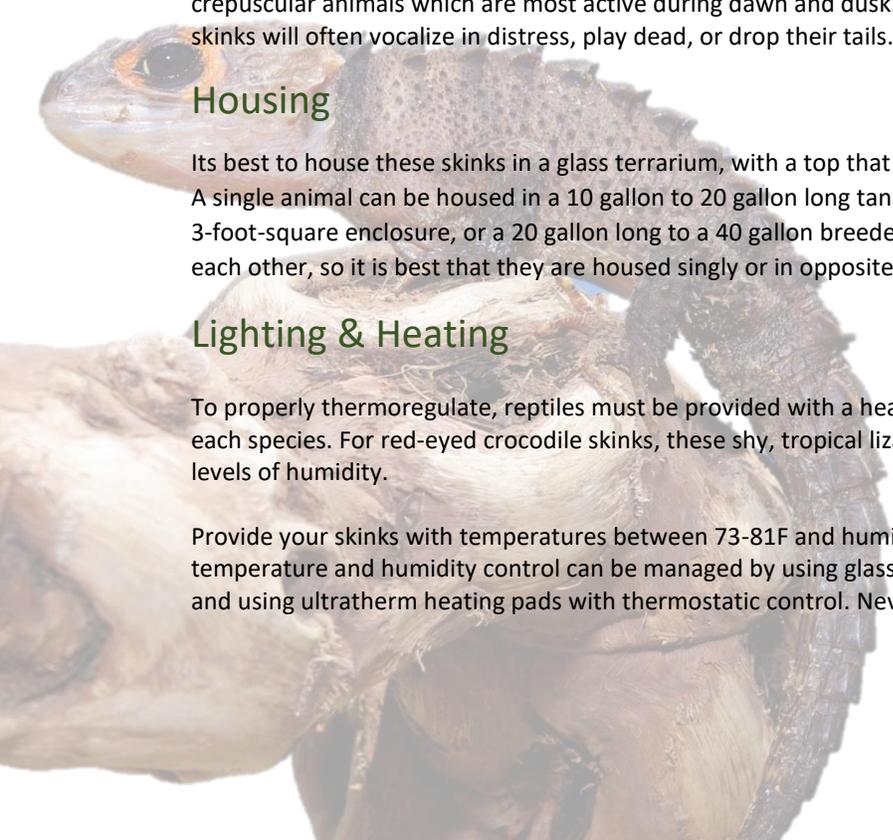
Housing

Its best to house these skinks in a glass terrarium, with a top that is partially enclosed but allows cross ventilation. A single animal can be housed in a 10 gallon to 20 gallon long tank. An adult pair can be comfortably managed in a 3-foot-square enclosure, or a 20 gallon long to a 40 gallon breeder tank. Same sex pairs can be aggressive toward each other, so it is best that they are housed singly or in opposite sex pairs.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For red-eyed crocodile skinks, these shy, tropical lizards enjoy consistent temperatures and high levels of humidity.

Provide your skinks with temperatures between 73-81F and humidity levels between 70-80%. Terrarium temperature and humidity control can be managed by using glass tops, by the type and wattage of lighting used, and using ultratherm heating pads with thermostatic control. Never use heat rocks as these may burn your lizard!



Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

Ultraviolet lighting is a topic that elicits different opinions with regards to these skinks. Many reptiles need ultraviolet light, necessary in the absorption and metabolism of calcium and D3, but there is no significant data that would suggest that this species requires it. However, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a day/night cycle for your lizard and display your pet in its best colors. Providing UV is a recommendation for housing this species.

Substrates & Cage Décor

These skinks do well on all kinds of substrate types, but often benefit from substrate mixtures containing 3-6" of substrate. The substrate you use should aid in humidity levels in the enclosure. Coconut fiber, orchid bark chips, sphagnum moss, cypress mulch, leaf litter, and soils free of manure and fertilizer are suitable for mixing or layering together.

Red-eyed crocodile skinks are shy, but will warm up to the exploration of their environment over time. They enjoy secure places for hiding and hunting to remain happy and healthy. Cork bark flats, cork rounds, flat pieces of driftwood, rocks, and commercially available reptile décor work well. Additionally, live plants can help boost humidity levels as well as provide humid microclimates within the space.

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Offer your lizard a water bowl, one that is shallow enough to allow your lizard to drink from and escape easily, but deep enough for the occasional soak. But its need for high levels of humidity is a must when staying hydrated. Misting your lizard's enclosure daily, if not multiple times a day with a hand sprayer or pressurized pump sprayer, will help maintain proper humidity levels and provide additional drinking opportunities.

It is important to note that the enclosure should not remain continuously wet, so expect dry periods in between misting. Additionally, proper drainage is a must. To prevent oversaturation of the substrate, it is highly recommended that a false bottom or drainage layer is built into the tank's foundation when first designing the enclosure for your skink.

Diet & Nutrition

Red-eyed crocodile skinks are insectivores, meaning they'll thrive off of a diet of appropriately sized and gutloaded crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, earthworms, black soldier larvae, etc. Waxworms and small superworms can be offered as a treat. Insects can be provided daily in a food bowl to be accessible, preferably one that is smooth sided such as a ceramic dish to prevent insects from escaping. Of course, feeder insects may be offered freely but too many uneaten insects left in the enclosure can be stressful or even harmful to your lizard or plants directly. Offer food daily to juveniles and every 48 hours to adults.

All food should be dusted with a high quality calcium/D3 supplement and multivitamin regularly – follow manufacturers directions.

Handling & Temperament

These shy lizards are not comfortable with being handled and are best kept as display animals only. Although they rarely bite, when grasped they often vocalize in distress, defecate, drop their tails, or play dead. Therefore, it is in the best interest of this animal that they are not handled and are appreciated as the stunning display animals that they are.

