



A peculiar, brightly colored lizard with a prehensile tail.

The green keel-bellied lizard, while rather shy and elusive, is certainly a looker! With its smooth, brightly colored scales and long, prehensile tail, this is one lizard that is sure to grab the attention of any experienced reptile enthusiast, making them incredible display animals. Even more, captive breeding efforts have removed the need to take this species from the wild. So while pricey, captive bred individuals are available for purchase.

Lifespan

With proper care, it is believed that green keel-bellied lizards can live 10-15 years on average.

Size

Hatchlings measure 3 to 5 inches. Average sized adults reach lengths of 10 to 16 inches, with the length of its prehensile tail accounting for nearly 70% of its total body length.

Natural History

The green keel-bellied lizard is a slender, brightly colored green lizard endemic to the coastal forests of Mozambique, Tanzania, and Kenya. They are an arboreal, diurnal species with an incredibly long prehensile tail useful for leverage on branches while navigating through trees in search of insects.

Housing

This species requires a spacious vertical enclosure. With its need for high humidity levels, it is also important that the enclosure be well ventilated to prevent excess moisture buildup. A single adult can be housed in a mid-sized enclosure measuring a minimum of 18x18x24H. When housing in pairs, a 24x24x36H sized enclosure or larger is recommended.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For green keel-bellied lizards, these diurnal, arboreal lizards enjoy consistent temperatures with an even more consistent and high humidity level.

Provide your lizard with a basking temperature of 90-95F. Properly position a vine or a branch a safe distance from the light. The ambient temperature should remain between 72-80F and nighttime temperatures should not fall below 68F. Humidity is especially important to this species. A moderately high humidity level between 60-70% should be maintained consistently.

The use of white incandescent basking bulbs for the day are perfect for generating appropriate basking temperatures closest to the top of the enclosure. Supplemental heat can be provided with the use of heating pads, CHEs (ceramic heat emitters), or regular white heat bulbs if needed. 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, or in this case both the top

and bottom of your lizard's enclosure. Measure basking temperatures with a temperature gun or digital thermometer with a probe.

These lizards need ultraviolet light, necessary in the absorption and metabolism of calcium and D3. Additionally, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of full spectrum lighting can provide a day/night cycle for your lizard and display your pet in its best colors. Providing moderate UVA/UVB is a necessity and not just a recommendation for this species.

Substrates & Cage Décor



A mulch or coconut coir substrate at the bottom of the enclosure can be used, but what is most important to this species is its vertical space. Driftwood, manzanita, grapewood, cork rounds and flats, and artificial vines combined with artificial plants create climbing opportunities, hiding places, visual barriers, and make the enclosure more attractive overall. Additionally, live plants can help boost humidity levels as well as provide humid microclimates within the space.

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.

Automation provides the best option for keeping your lizard hydrated, not to mention making your lizard's care easier. A quality fogger or mister can provide humidity spikes and hydration throughout the day. 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, a false bottom or drainage layer can be built into the tank's foundation.

Diet & Nutrition

Green keel-bellied lizards are insectivores, meaning they'll thrive off of a diet of appropriately sized and gutloaded hydei fruit flies, crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, 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.

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

Handling & Temperament

While active and energetic during the day, these lizards can also be rather timid and elusive. It is in the best interest of this animal that they are not handled and are kept as display animals only.