



*Photo Credit: WildHerps.com

Amazonian Leaf Lizard *(Stenocercus fimbriatus)*

Is it a Leaf? Or a Lizard!?

Amazonian leaf lizards, also sometimes known as the “dead leaf” lizards, or “western leaf lizards”, are a unique species of relatively small, semi-arboreal lizard found in the tropical to sub-tropical rainforests and woodlands of northern South America, namely Peru, Brazil, and Bolivia. This species, as their names might imply, are excellent leaf mimics which occupy and blend in extremely well amongst the forest floor leaf litter, fallen bark, and other debris, and thus are a very cryptic species in their coloration and appearance. Ground coloration along the flanks, or sides from just past the forelimbs, to just past the hind-limbs or to the tail ranges from a darker brown to reddish-brown, or sometimes dark purplish in color, while the rest of the head, neck, back or dorsal, and base of the tail ranges in color from a lighter brown, tan, or cream color. The head is relatively large and wedge shaped, with a darker brown band or stripe running through the eye, and scattered darker brown dots along the back as well. Thin, lighter stripes radiate from an also narrow dorsal stripe on the back, giving them the exact appearance of a veined leaf. Amazonian leaf lizards can be a hardy and relatively easily cared for species; however, relatively little information or captive bred individuals are currently available of this species, although hopefully this will begin to change in the future.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Iguania

Family: Tropiduridae

Genus: Stenocercus

Species: *Stenocercus fimbriatus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

The lifespan and longevity of these lizards, whether in the wild or in captivity, is still unknown, although they have the potential to probably reach at least 5 or more years under proper care and husbandry.

Distribution and Habitat

Amazonian leaf lizards, as their name might imply, are indigenous to portions of northern South America. They may range from the Amazonian Basin of Brazil, eastern slopes of the Andes Mountain Range in Peru, and possibly also in Bolivia. Little information is currently known about this species' particular niches and habitat preferences, although it can probably be surmised that these lizards occupy the forest floor and lower vegetation of the tropical to sub-tropical rainforests and woodlands, where they blend in well amongst the dead and fallen leaves, fallen bark, and other forest floor debris.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Amazonian leaf lizards are fairly small lizards that average about 2.8 to 3.4 inches in snout-to-vent (SVL) length. Total snout to tail length ranges from about 3.2 to 7.4 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Semi-Arboreal. Provide a sturdy and secure enclosure that is escape proof. Amazonian leaf lizards are active and arboreal lizards that can be maintained in at least a 20 to 30 gallon tall, well ventilated glass or screen terrarium or enclosure depending on one's ambient household temperatures and humidity. Slightly dampened peat moss, untreated potting soil, orchid bark substrates, dried leaf litter to mimic their forest floor environment, and/or sphagnum moss can be utilized for a substrate. Additional furnishings for basking, climbing, hiding opportunities are also important components to your leaf lizard setup, and should include natural or artificial foliage, rocks, logs, vines, or branches. These lizards can be misted periodically or can be provided a small, shallow water dish that should be cleaned and replaced regularly at least two to three times weekly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Amazonian leaf lizards are a relatively hardy and easily kept species when it comes to temperatures and lighting. They will also bask, and thus a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter should be provided. Suitable temperatures for this species generally range from 75 to 80 degrees F as an ambient temperature and around 85 to 95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of these lizards in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. These lizards should likely have moderate to somewhat high relative humidity levels of at least 60 to 70%, although this can vary somewhat depending on their natural range.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, Amazonian leaf lizards are primarily insectivorous, feeding on small insects and other invertebrates. In captivity, these lizards can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, or other insects. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. These lizards also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)

and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

As with other small lizards, Amazonian leaf lizards can be handled or restrained for short periods of time, but are typically not an overly suitable hands on species that tolerates frequent and/or prolonged handling. Too much handling will stress this species, and they are better maintained overall as a more hands off animal whenever possible.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

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Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

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