



*Photo Credit: Missouri Department of Conservation

Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris*)

Colorful Collars from the Southwest

Collard lizards are medium sized lizards consisting of two genera and approximately 12 species of the southwestern United States and Mexico that belong the large and diverse family iguanidae. This species is also known as the Eastern collared lizard, and more specifically belong to the collared lizard family known as Crotaphytinae. The dorsal and background color of these lizards ranges from light turquoise blue, greenish blue, to grayish blue with numerous whitish flecks interspaced with pale yellow stripes or bands. Collared lizards derive their name from the black and white bands present on the nape, while the head is broad and reddish brown to brown in color. Collared lizards are active, alert, and diurnal lizards that can often be observed during the peak or warmest parts of the day thermoregulating or foraging for smaller prey amongst sparse vegetation. When threatened, collard lizards will use their speed to evade predators, and seek refuge in inaccessible rock crevices or burrows. If further threatened, they will gape, hiss, and inflate their bodies to appear larger and more intimidating. Collard lizards can make for active, personable, and unconventional pet reptiles to maintain by the beginning to intermediate level enthusiast looking for something a little more different and unique.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Iguania

Family: Iguanidae

Subfamily: Crotaphytinae

Genus: Crotaphytus

Species: *Crotaphytus collaris**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, collared lizards can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Collard lizards are a genus of relatively small to medium sized, primarily terrestrial iguanid lizards indigenous to the western and southwestern United States, and into northern Mexico depending upon the species. Within this range, these lizards occupy rocky, arid to semi-arid desert to semi-deserts, scrublands, hillsides, savannahs and grasslands, to open, dry forests and woodlands with sparse vegetation, and rocky outcroppings or boulders in which to thermoregulate, forage for food, and escape predation.

Origin/History

Crotaphytus collaris (Say, 1823).

Unfortunately, specific information is lacking as to when collard lizards first entered the pet trade, although they probably have been present for at least several decades. Most are probably wild-collected in origin.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Collard lizards range from about 2.5 to 4.0 inches as hatchlings and juveniles in total snout-to-tail length, and about 8.0 to 16.0 inches as adults in total snout-to-tail length. Average snout-to-vent length may vary depending on the species, but ranges from 3.8 to 5.7 inches (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling collard lizards can be housed in a 20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult collard lizards require a minimum of a 30 gallon long terrarium or enclosure or larger. Hatchling and adult collard lizards can be maintained on a substrate of play sand mixtures, or ground walnut shell substrates. Avoid using substrates made from reptile bark that result in environments that are too humid. Provide a small dish of clean water, and change and clean it every several days, or sooner if fouled. Soaking them at least once weekly in lukewarm water for 15 to 20 minutes can also help raise their hydration. Provide ample basking and hiding opportunities by providing artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Ideal temperatures for collared lizards range from 80 to 85 degrees F on the cool side and around 105 to 110 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 collared 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. Collared lizards should be maintained at low relative humidity at, or around 30 to 50%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Primarily Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, collared lizards are primarily insectivorous. They will eat a variety of insects and other invertebrates, although they will also occasionally catch and consume smaller vertebrates as well. Collared lizards in captivity can be given a

variety of feeder insects and other invertebrates of appropriate size, frequency, and proportion at least two to three times weekly. Feeder crickets, mealworms, waxworms, roaches, and other feeder insects, as well as some greens, fruits, and vegetable material such as dandelion greens and some commercially available omnivore and mixed fruit and vegetable diets can also be provided. They can also occasionally be given small pre-killed rodents of appropriate size, but sparingly. Providing calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation, as well as nutritional gutloading any feeder insects in these lizard's diets is essential for their health and well-being. 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

Collared lizards may initially be nervous and skittish lizards, but captive bred or born individuals or those that become handled regularly can become very docile and personable pets that provide an alternative to more common species. Handle your collard lizard gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal.

****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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