



*Rebecca Wyman/RAW Reptiles

Crested Gecko (*Correlophus ciliatus*)

Re-Discovered Staples from New Caledonia

Also known as the New Caledonian crested gecko, or cresties, the crested gecko is a small to medium sized gecko with a prehensile tail and large wedge shaped head. They can be highly variable in color depending on the locality and trait, and can be variable amounts or shades of tan, gray, brown, reddish, orange, or yellowish sometimes with spots, stripes, or dashes. They also have eye-lash like projections above each of their eyes, and crests running from behind their eyes, neck, and to their tail, giving them their names of crested gecko and eyelash gecko. As with many other geckos, they also have enlarged toe pads for climbing and adhering to surfaces using weak van der Waals forces that are also a large focus of biomimicry. Crested geckos also have semi-prehensile tails that they use to grip onto branches, and if this tail is lost or dropped, will not re-grow as in most other geckos. Once thought to be extinct in the wild, they were re-discovered in 1994, and are now a very popular staple in the pet trade.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Gekkota

Family: Diplodactylidae

Genus: Correlophus

Species: *Correlophus ciliatus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, crested geckos can attain longevity of 10 to 12 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The crested gecko is indigenous only to the islands of New Caledonia near Australia, where they may occur on the islands of Grand Terre (or Provence Sud), and the Isle of Pines, although reports also exist for Kotomo Island as well. Within this range, at least three separate, and disjunct populations are known, and being found among the highest peaks and elevations of the

islands' tropical rainforests. During the day, these geckos occupy the thick vegetation near the forest floor, while at night, while they spend more of their time basking and foraging in the shrubs and lower canopy at night.

Origin/History

Correlophus ciliatus Guichenot, 1866. However, they were thought to be extinct for many decades until they were rediscovered in the wild in 1994.

Whether this was truly due to this species becoming extinct and then being re-discovered, or simply due to explorers searching for them in the wrong areas, crested geckos were first imported into the U.S. shortly after they were re-discovered in 1994, but were not well known in the pet trade until the early 2000's. Now, the crested gecko has become a staple species in herpetoculture, being bred and kept by the tens of thousands by hobbyists, enthusiasts, and reptile specialty expos and stores.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Crested geckos are fairly small geckos, averaging about 6.0 to 10.0 inches as adults in total snout-to-tail length. Average snout-to-vent length ranges from about 4.0 to 5.1 inches snout to vent length (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof, and the size of the enclosure recommended will depend on the age and size of the gecko. For hatchlings up to 6 months or so, a 10 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 20 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used. Crested geckos are arboreal, and height is more important than floor space. Provide plenty of live or artificial plants, branches, cork bark, or other furnishings for ample climbing and hiding opportunities. Substrates that retain and hold humidity well are recommended, and naturalistic substrates can include sphagnum moss and fir shavings, natural moss, or similar substrates. To maintain humidity and hydration, daily or regular misting is necessary. They will drink the condensation from the enclosure's furnishings and walls, and a small water dish can also be provided, and must be kept clean, but will usually be seldom used.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Crested geckos have fairly simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). Ideal temperatures for crested geckos range from 72 to 80 degrees F, or otherwise at room temperature. Do not keep them at over 80 degrees F or below 65 degrees F. Also be sure to provide a daily photoperiod or light cycle of at least 10 to 12 hours. 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. Crested geckos require moderate levels of relative humidity, and should be maintained at, or around 50 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Omnivorous and Frugivorous; In the wild, crested geckos are omnivorous to frugivorous, meaning they eat insects and various fruit and other plant matter. In captivity, many commercially available diets are available that contain most, if not all of the essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals required for their optimal health and nutrition. These diets are quite simple to use and prepare for your animal(s) as instructed. Feeder crickets, or other small insects of appropriate size can also be given, but should be no larger than the animal's snout to eye. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Food should be offered in a small dish mounted off of the enclosure's floor, particularly for largely arboreal species that seldom come to the enclosure floor. Be sure that calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation needs are still being met with any diets used 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

Crested geckos generally tolerate moderate levels of handling even as hatchlings. Handle crested geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. Take care to not grab your gecko by its tail or it may detach if your gecko perceives you as a predator or a threat. Unlike many geckos, the tails of crested geckos will not regenerate if lost, and animals that are missing tails are often known as "frog butts". Most adult crested geckos will settle down considerably and become quite docile and easily handled. Allow them to walk or jump from hand to hand, but also be aware that they may jump as well.

****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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