



**Photo Credit: The Hans India*

Golden Gecko (*Gekko badenii*)/ *Gekko Ulikovskii* (Synonym)

Velvet-like Gold

Golden geckos are a sturdily built, medium sized to large arboreal species of gecko indigenous to Vietnam. Golden geckos earn their common names from their yellowish, goldish, to orangeish wash to their smooth, velvety skin and scales. These geckos have large, well defined toe pads, lidless eyes, and a grayish to bluish gray ground color with a pale golden, yellowish, to brownish yellow wash. As with most other geckos, they possess enlarged pads on their toes and digits known as lamellae, which are coated with millions of tiny microscopic hairs known as setae. These setae use a weak van der Waals force that enables these geckos to adhere to many surfaces. Also as with many other geckos, the golden gecko has the ability to vocalize by making barking and/or squeak like sounds to signal dominance and territoriality, as well as when they are in distress. Although most golden geckos available still are wild caught, they can make for unique and easily kept pets provided the correct care.

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: Gekkonidae

Genus: Gekko

Species: *Gekko badenii**/*Gekko Ulikovskii* (Synonym)

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

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

Distribution and Habitat

Golden geckos are a species of relatively medium sized to large, arboreal geckos indigenous to portions of southern to south central Vietnam and potentially Cambodia. More specifically, this species occurs in the Tay Ninh and Kon Tum Provinces of Vietnam. Within this range, golden geckos occupy primarily arboreal to semi-arboreal environments, including lowland tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, cliff areas, and rural to suburban residential areas, or other areas of human habitation, often along tree trunks or interior and exterior walls and other sidings of

houses and other buildings.

Origin/History

Gekko badenii Szczerbak & Nekrasova, 1994. Gekko ulikovskii Darevsky & Orlov, 1994 (Synonym).

It is not known when golden geckos were first kept or imported for the pet trade, although they may have been since at least the 1980's or 1990's. Most were, and still are wild-collected.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Golden geckos are small to medium sized gecko species which range from 5.0 to 8.0 inches as adults in total snout-to-tail length. Maximum snout-to-vent length of about 3.0 inches (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 5 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 10 to 20 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used. Golden 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

Ideal temperatures for golden geckos range from 75 to 85 degrees F ambient temperature and an 85 to 90 degree F basking spot. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop to between 70 to 75 degrees F. Golden 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). 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. Golden geckos require moderate to high levels of relative humidity, and should be maintained at, or within about 60 to 80%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, these geckos are insectivorous, and will eat a large array of insects and other small invertebrates. They can also be frugivorous, and will also eat some fruit matter as well. In captivity, feed golden geckos a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Golden geckos 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. They will also consume a variety of fruits and other diets including commercially available crested gecko diets, mangos, papaya, bananas, and other fruits. Offering a variety of food is most important. Food can be given by hand or in a small dish mounted off of the enclosure floor for arboreal animals. 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

Golden geckos are delicate, fast moving, and skittish species of geckos. Therefore, handling should be limited to periods whenever necessary. With time and patient handling, these geckos can sometimes be handled. Handle any of these geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. As with many geckos and other lizards, they can also drop their tails when frightened or handled roughly. 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.

****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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