



**Photo Credit: Blackbea R*

Long tailed Grass Lizard (*Takydromus sexlineatus*)

Small, but with Big Lizard Personalities

Long tailed grass lizards are a small, arboreal, diurnal species of lizard. The most obvious feature of these lizards are their very long tails, which can be as much as three times their snout to vent (SVL) length. They have a slender, elongated body with a ground color of olive brown to brown with a pointed snout, two or three pale yellowish or whitish dorsal stripes, and a paler yellow underside. These lizards use arm waving, head bobbing, and other bodily movements to signal territory despite their small size. These lizards can be very agile and fast moving, quickly retreating into the safety of thick vegetation or crevices, or remaining motionless and cryptic when threatened or as means of defense. They are also frequent baskers as well, and thermoregulate in the dawn and dusk hours. As with many other lizard species, long tailed grass lizards can also drop their tails through caudal autotomy, which momentarily startles and/or distracts the potential predator long enough for the lizard to make an escape. A new tail regenerates after several weeks, although it is somewhat more vestigial than the original. Long tailed grass lizards can make for very hardy, inexpensive, and personable pets to maintain for someone looking for a small lizard with a big personality!

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Scincomorpha

Family: Lacertidae

Genus: Takydromus

Species: *Takydromus sexlineatus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

Long tailed grass lizards may attain longevity of 5 to 8 years or slightly more under the proper care.

Distribution and Habitat

Long tailed grass lizards are a unique species of small, arboreal to semi-arboreal lizards indigenous to a wide range of southern to eastern and southeastern Asia. More specifically, this species ranges from eastern India, through southern to northern China, northern Myanmar,

Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, to the Malaysian Peninsula, and into Indonesia. This species also occurs in the Amur region of eastern Russia and Japan as well. Within this range, long tailed grass lizards occupy a variety of primarily terrestrial to semi-arboreal environments, including damp forests and woodlands, to savannahs and grasslands, where they use rocks, logs, downed or low vegetation and other debris on or near the ground to thermoregulate, forage, and seek refuge.

Origin/History

Takydromus sexlineatus Daudin, 1802.

Long-tailed grass lizards (*Takydromus sexlineatus*) have been kept as pets for many years, but the exact date of their first importation to the U.S. and Europe is not known. However, it is known that they have been a popular pet reptile in Asia, particularly in Japan and Taiwan, since at least the 1970s. Long-tailed grass lizards would become relatively easy to care for and have a docile temperaments, which made them popular among reptile enthusiasts. They are also hardy and adaptable.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Long tailed grass lizards are fairly small and very slender lizards that typically reach up to 10.0 to 12.0 inches or slightly greater in total snout-to-tail length depending on the species. Maximum snout-to-vent length varies depending on the exact species, but ranges from about 2.1 to 4.7 inches snout-to-vent length (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Semi-Arboreal to Arboreal. Provide a sturdy and secure enclosure that is escape proof. Grass 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, or sphagnum moss can be utilized for a substrate. Additional furnishings for basking, climbing, hiding opportunities are also important components to a grass 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 large shallow water dish that should be cleaned and replaced regularly at least two to three times weekly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a sufficient day/night thermal gradient with full spectrum UV lighting with ambient temperatures in 85 to 90 degree F range for a basking spot during the day, 75 to 80 degree F ambient temperatures, and mid-60 to mid-70 degrees F at night. 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. 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 long tailed grass 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. Long tailed grass lizards require moderate to high levels of relative humidity, and

should be maintained at, or within about 60 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; Long tailed grass lizards are primarily insectivorous in the wild and in captivity, feeding on insects and other small invertebrates. In captivity, feed long tailed grass lizards a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, and other insects. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Long tailed grass 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

Long tailed grass lizards are active and spirited lizards that may tolerate some levels of handling, but prolonged handling may cause stress to these animals. These lizards can also drop their tails if handled roughly as well. Grass lizards may initially be skittish, but can become quite bold and acclimated to their keeper's presence for small lizards, often even being able to be hand fed.

****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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