



\*Photo Credit: Nature Glenlg Trust

## Marbled Gecko (*Christinus/Phyllodactylus marmoratus*)

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### Southern-Most Australian Geckos

Marbled geckos are a relatively small, arboreal to semi-arboreal species of gecko indigenous to a wide range of southern Australia. There are four species in the genus *Christinus* overall, with two subspecies under the nominate species of *C. marmoratus*. As with most geckos, this species is nocturnal to crepuscular, and is primarily insectivorous, feeding on a wide variety of insects and other small invertebrates. During the warmer summer months, and hotter times of the day, these geckos will also seek refuge in deeper, rocky crevices, burrows, tree hollows, loose bark, and cavities, and as well as thicker vegetation, and underneath rocks, logs, and other natural or manmade debris. Marbled geckos have also been found to be surprisingly gregarious, with as many as 10 individuals co-existing together in the same area or microhabitat. Marbled geckos have relatively long, thick tails, enlarged toe pads for climbing and gripping, and elliptical pupils. These geckos can be quite variable in coloration and appearance, with a lighter colored series of chevrons, reticulate, to marbled patterns on a dorsal surface ranging in color from tan, light to dark brown, reddish or reddish-brown, grayish, to pinkish. As with many geckos, marbled geckos can also drop their tails if handled roughly, but can make for great pet reptile species with 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:** *Christinus/Phyllodactylus*

**Species:** *Christinus/Phyllodactylus marmoratus*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, marbled geckos can attain longevity of at least 5 to 10 years or potentially more in captivity.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

Marbled geckos are widely distributed across much of southern Australia, from New South Wales to Southwestern Western Australia, as well as a number of islands off of or near South Australia and West Australia. This species may be found in a variety of habitats, including semi-arid open shrublands or scrublands, riverine forests and woodlands, and urban or agricultural areas within this range.

### **Origin/History**

*Christinus marmoratus* (Gray, 1845).

Unfortunately, information pertaining to when marbled geckos, *C. marmoratus* first became available or were first imported for the pet trade are lacking, although they may likely have been present for at least several decades.

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Marbled geckos are fairly small geckos which range in size from 1.5 to approximately 5.9 inches as adults in total snout-to-tail length. Maximum snout-to-vent length is about 2.7 inches (SVL).

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Arboreal.*** Marbled geckos are primarily arboreal species of geckos, and housing must be sealed and escape proof. Provide a minimum of a 20 gallon tall glass enclosure or similarly sized tall terrarium or enclosure with adequate ventilation for one to up to five to six geckos. These geckos can be maintained on naturalistic substrates such as natural sphagnum, sphagnum fir mixtures, cypress mulch, or non-fertilized potting soil that can retain higher levels of humidity this species requires. A two inch layer of hydro balls beneath another two to three inch layer of substrate can be perfect for maintaining mourning geckos. Also be sure to provide ample, dense live or artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, cork bark, vines, logs, or other naturalistic decor for ample basking, climbing, and hiding opportunities. Height is more important than floor space for marbled geckos. For moisture, mist at least twice daily. A small water bowl or dish can be provided, but will usually be seldom used, as these geckos obtain most of their hydration from their food and from the droplets and condensation obtained from misting.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Marbled geckos are a primarily semi-arid species. These geckos should be kept at levels of humidity at around 70 to 75%, which can be supplemented whenever necessary through regular misting. Misting can be provided either manually, or through commercially available misters or foggers. Ideal temperatures for these geckos range from a gradient of 77 to 82 degrees F ambient temperature during daytime/nighttime photoperiods of 12 to 14 hours. Warmer, basking end temperatures can be up to 90 to 93 degrees F. UVA/UVB overhead lighting is not required for marbled geckos, but if it is needed or desired, an appropriate low wattage form of lighting and heating can be used to supplement these temperatures. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop slightly to around 72 to 75 degrees F below this range using a 24 hour under tank heating pad or nighttime infrared spectrum form of lighting and heating. 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.

## **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Insectivorous***; In the wild, marbled geckos are insectivorous, and will eat a large array of insects and other small invertebrates. They are also partially frugivorous, eating some amounts of fruits and nectars as well. In captivity, feed marbled geckos a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, fruit fly cultures, or waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Marbled 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. These geckos will also eat several of the commercially available meal replacement powders such as crested gecko diets two to three times weekly. Their overall feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Food can be offered by hand or in a small dish mounted off of the enclosure floor for arboreal animals. 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**

Marbled geckos are a fragile and delicate skinned species and can also be fast moving and skittish. Therefore, handling should be discouraged or be limited to periods whenever necessary. If handling is absolutely required or desired, always handle the animal 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**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

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