



\*Dillon Damuth

## Mourning Gecko (*Lepidodactylus lugubris*)

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### **Hardy and Rapidly Reproducing**

Mourning geckos are a genus of small, arboreal geckos also known as common smooth scaled geckos. Mourning geckos are a small, arboreal gecko species that range in color from tan, light brown, to grayish with several darker brown to black chevron shaped markings along its back and tail. A dark and light band or stripe also runs through each eye. Mourning geckos are a parthenogenetic gecko species, meaning they consist only of females with self-copulation and reproductive capabilities. One or two eggs are typically laid and adhered to a protected surface every two to three weeks. As with many other geckos, mourning geckos lack eyelids, and use their thick, fleshy tongues to clean their eyes and pupils. Also as with many gecko species, these geckos possess enlarged toe pads consisting of several rows of lamellae covered in millions of microscopic hairs known as setae. These setae enable the gecko to cling to, adhere, and climb a wide variety of surfaces with ease. Also as with many other gecko species, is the fact that they can vocalize by creating clicking or squeaking sounds when threatened, defensive, or to display territory and social structure. Mourning geckos are a unique, hardy, prolific, and easily maintained species of gecko that has rightfully earned its popularity in herpetoculture.

### **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:** *Lepidodactylus*

**Species:** *Lepidodactylus lugubris*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

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

### **Distribution and Habitat**

Mourning geckos are widely ranging in the tropical to sub-tropical rainforests, forests, and woodlands in coastal areas of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Their range includes Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, New Guinea, several outlying Australian islands, Guam, and the Society Islands. They are also introduced elsewhere including Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, The Galapagos, Colombia and Chile in South America, and Hawaii as well as other areas of Central and South America.

### **Origin/History**

*Lepidodactylus lugubris* (Duméril & Bibron, 1836).

Mourning geckos (*Lepidodactylus lugubris*) are believed to have been first imported into the mainland United States sometime during the 1980's or 1990's. However, the exact date of their importation is difficult to determine as these geckos were likely introduced to the U.S. pet trade through various means, such as stowaways on plants or other imports, and they were likely introduced to Hawaiian Islands in earlier decades, possibly in the 1940's or 1950's.

It is believed that the species originated from the islands of the southwestern Pacific, including Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. Since their introduction, mourning geckos have become established in various parts of the world, including Florida, Hawaii, and other tropical areas. Mourning geckos would then become somewhat popular in the pet trade due to their simple care requirements, social nature, and unique parthenogenic capabilities.

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner.

### **Size**

Mourning geckos are fairly small geckos which range in size from 3.5 to 4.0 inches in total snout-to tail length as adults. Snout-to-vent length ranges from about 1.5 to 1.9 inches snout-to-vent length (SVL).

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Arboreal.*** Mourning 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 mourning 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**

Mourning geckos are a primarily tropical species that does best at humidity levels between 60 and 80%. These geckos should be kept at these higher ranges of humidity by frequent regular misting. Allow the enclosure to dry adequately in between misting as well. 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. UVA/UVB overhead lighting is not required

for mourning geckos, although if it is needed or desired, an appropriate low wattage form of lighting and heating can be used to supplement these temperatures and can benefit the overall health and well-being of these geckos. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop slightly to around 72 to 75 degrees F below this range. 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, mourning 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 mourning geckos a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, fruit fly cultures, or waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Mourning 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**

Mourning 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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