



*Photo Credit: Bill Love

Peter's Banded Skink (*Scincopus fasciatus*)

Middle Eastern Newcomers

The Peter's banded skink is a relatively small to mid-sized skink species that is quite new and recent to the pet industry. This is a somewhat small to medium sized skink species with smooth scales on a long, tapered body characterized by a yellowish, tan, to orange-yellow ground color, and several darker cross bands, stripes, or cross banding. The head, large dark eyes, and snout of this species are also fairly large and somewhat wedge shaped.

These unique skinks have a fragmented, discontinuous range over arid to semi-arid regions of northern Africa, including Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, as well as portions of northern Nigeria, Mauritania, and Algeria. Relatively little is still known about the Peter's banded skink's habits and natural history in the wild and in captivity, but it is known to be a nocturnal to crepuscular, burrowing species of skink that is known to be reclusive in nature and feeding on small insects and other invertebrates, and potentially some fruit and vegetable matter as well.

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: Scincidae

Genus: Scincopus

Species: *Scincopus fasciatus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

Although the Peter's banded skink is still fairly new to the pet industry, this species, if provided the proper care, can potentially attain longevity of 10 to 15 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Peter's banded skinks are a relatively small to medium sized, terrestrial species of skink which have a fragmented, discontinuous range over arid to semi-arid regions of northern Africa, including Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, as well as portions of northern Nigeria, Mauritania, and

Algeria. Within this range, Peter's banded skinks occupy primarily terrestrial environments, including sandy, arid to semi-arid deserts, dune areas, grasslands, and savannahs to open, dry forests and woodlands.

Origin/History

Scincopus fasciatus (Peters, 1864).

Peter's banded skinks are a relatively new species to pet trade. The first records of them in the pet trade can be found as far back as the 1980's, although no other imports were known back then. However, it would not be until 2014 or 2015 when importation of this skink species became much more prevalent, and they became more widely known in the pet trade.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Most adult Peter's banded skinks range from 6.0 to 8.0 inches in total snout to tail length, and are fairly small skinks. Maximum snout-to-vent length (SVL) not documented.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Fossorial. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. One to a pair of these skinks can be maintained in a 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, and they can be housed communally accordingly larger enclosures. They should be provided with a loose, sandy substrate that they can readily burrow into that is at least 6 to 8 inches in depth. These skinks will burrow, but are not found to be as specialized to a subterranean lifestyle as sandfish skinks, as commonly believed. A loose, non-toxic substrate such as play sand, or ground walnut shells will be acceptable substrates to use. Provide additional hide boxes and artificial foliage, driftwood, rock hides, or log hides for ample basking and other hiding opportunities. Provide a shallow, sturdy bowl or dish of fresh water as well. Peter's banded skinks require relatively low humidity levels at around 20 to 30%, and misting to occasionally raise to raise humidity levels up to about 60 to 70% can also benefit these subterranean skinks.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

From what is known about Peter's banded skinks thus far, is that they are largely crepuscular to nocturnal, but should be provided with the appropriate overhead basking lights during the day and nocturnal red lights 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. Ideal temperatures for these skinks range from 80 to 85 degrees F on the cool side and about 95 to 100 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Pete's banded skinks should be given overhead UVA/UVB incandescent and fluorescent lighting to do well. 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

Primarily Insectivorous to Omnivorous; In the wild, Peter's banded skinks are primarily insectivorous to omnivorous, meaning they will ambush and consume small insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch and swallow. They may also eat some fruit or vegetable matter in the wild as well. Feed these skinks in captivity a mixed assortment of crickets, mealworms, superworms, roaches, and waxworms. Gut load these prey items by feeding them

commercially available diets for added nutritional value. They may eat small, frozen-thawed rodents as well, but feed them these sparingly, if at all. Feed them these insects in a bowl or dish every other day. Some have also reported success in feeding their Peter's banded skinks small amounts of fruit and vegetable material in a dish, including but not limited to some fruit cocktail mixtures for Phelsuma (day geckos), chopped apples, peaches, melon, banana, kiwi, or other fruits. Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements in these skink's diets whenever possible as well. 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

As with many skinks, Peter's banded skinks may become quite accustomed to regular human interaction, and can often even be hand fed. Many can also be handled for short periods of time, but are often a faster moving and flightier species when in hand. Care should therefore be taken to not accidentally drop these animals when handling them.

****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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