



*Chris Lawler

Pictus, Panther, or Ocelot Gecko (*Paroedura pictus*)

Small, Painted Geckos

Pictus geckos are also referred to by other common names including the Madagascar ground gecko, ocelot gecko, and panther gecko. They are a relatively small, terrestrial species of gecko with large heads, and a brown, reddish brown, to tan base color and dark edged banding with a white dorsal stripe present. Although pictus geckos are primarily a terrestrial species that lack enlarged toe pads, they can and do occasionally climb into low shrubs and vegetation as well. They also exhibit territorial behaviors as well, as with many other gecko species. As with several other species of geckos found elsewhere in the world, pictus geckos also have a thick fleshy tail that are used to store fat during prolonged dry periods. Their tails can also be lost through caudal autotomy as a means of startling and/or distracting predators long enough for the gecko to escape. Within several weeks to months, a new tail will then regrow, but will remain somewhat more vestigial and limited in function. As with many other geckos, pictus geckos are also able to vocalize by creating squeaking or clicking sounds when they are defensive, handled, or become territorial. Although they can be a somewhat shy species of gecko, the pictus gecko is a small, hardy, and inexpensive gecko that makes for a popular beginner's choice with a large amount of color and pattern variability.

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: *Paroedura*

Species: *Paroedura pictus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, pictus geckos can attain longevity of 10 to 12 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The panther, or pictus gecko is a small to medium sized, primarily terrestrial species of gecko

indigenous only to the island of Madagascar near the eastern coast of Africa. More specifically, this species occupies the western, southern, and southwestern portions of the island of Madagascar. Within this range, pictus, or panther geckos occupy primarily terrestrial environments including dry, tropical to sub-tropical forests and woodlands, to somewhat open savannahs, where they seek shelter during the day underneath rocks, leaf litter, and other debris, or in burrows.

Origin/History

Paroedura picta Peters, 1854.

Not much is documented regarding the first appearances of the ocelot, or pictus geckos in herpetoculture, although they were most likely first imported from Madagascar (along with other Madagascar species) during the early 1990's, where they would then be commonly bred in captivity afterwards in Europe and the U.S.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Pictus, or painted geckos are fairly small to medium sized gecko species, typically reaching up to 4.0 to 8.0 inches in snout to tail length as adults. Snout-to-vent length reaches up to about 4.6 inches (SVL) or less.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling pictus geckos can be housed in a 5 to 10 gallon or similar sized terrarium or enclosure, while adults will require at least a 10 to 20 gallon long enclosure. These active, nocturnal to crepuscular geckos are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that holds humidity reasonably well but is not readily ingestible such as play sand mixtures, crushed walnut shells, or natural bark substrates. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. A humid hide can also be created for additional humidity. For moisture, provide a small bowl or dish of fresh water two to three times per week and mist once to twice weekly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a thermal gradient, or a warm side to the enclosure, and maintain these geckos at ideal temperatures ranging from 70 to 75 degrees F on the cool side and ambient temperatures, and 80 to 85 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Pictus geckos are primarily crepuscular to nocturnal, 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). 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. Pictus, or panther geckos should be maintained at moderate to high levels of relative humidity, at, or around 50 to 80%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Primarily Insectivorous; In the wild, pictus geckos are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. In captivity, feed pictus 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. These 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. 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

Pictus geckos are a smaller and more delicate species to handle, and thus any handling should be done so carefully. Handle your gecko gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Do not grab your gecko by its tail or it may detach if they perceive you as a predator or threat. Allow them to walk in between or from hand to hand.

****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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