



**Photo Credit: Somci*

White Lined or Skunk Gecko (*Gekko vittatus*)

Uniquely Marked Geckos

White lined geckos are a medium to large, arboreal gecko species that are also often known as the “skunk geckos” and white lined geckos. These arboreal geckos have noticeable toe pads, and a ground color of tan or light to dark brown with a pale whitish stripe converging from behind each eye forming a “V” shape at the nape, and grading into a single dorsal stripe along their dorsum. The tail typically has wide light and dark bands as well. White lined geckos are known for being quite territorial, and use their vocalizations to signal their territory as well as when threatened or in distress. These geckos also have sturdy, semi-prehensile tails, and large prominent toe pads with lamellae coated with tiny, microscopic setae, which they use to adhere to surfaces using weak van der Waals forces. Skunk geckos are popular reptile pets, but are better suited for the slightly more knowledgeable and experienced pet owner or enthusiast overall.

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: Gekko

Species: *Gekko vittatus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, white lined geckos can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The white lined, or skunk gecko is a medium sized to large, arboreal species of gecko indigenous to southern to southeastern Asia. More specifically, this species can occur from the Indonesian Islands of Java and Halmahera, through New Guinea, Palau, the Santa Cruz Islands, Bismarck

Archipelago, and the Solomon Islands. Within this range, skunk or white lined geckos occupy primarily arboreal to semi-arboreal environments, including tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, cliff areas, and rural to suburban residential areas, or other areas of human habitation, often along tree trunks or interior and exterior walls and other sidings of houses and other buildings.

Origin/History

Gekko vittatus Houttuyn, 1782.

There does not seem to be any information as to when Gekko vittatus, or skunk geckos were first kept or imported, although they have been around since at least a couple of the past decades.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Skunk, or white lined geckos can be fairly medium sized to large geckos beginning at about 2.0 to 3.0 inches as hatchlings in snout-to-tail length, and ranging from 8.0 to 10.0 inches as adults in snout to tail length. Average snout-to-vent length ranges from about 4.7 to 5.5 inches snout to vent length (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof, and the size of the enclosure recommended will depend on the age and size of the gecko. For hatchlings up to 6 months or so, a 5 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 20 to 30 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used. Skunk geckos are arboreal, and height is more important than floor space. Provide plenty of live or artificial plants, branches, cork bark, or other furnishings for ample climbing and hiding opportunities. Substrates that retain and hold humidity well are recommended, and naturalistic substrates can include sphagnum moss and fir shavings, natural moss, or similar substrates. To maintain humidity and hydration, daily or regular misting is necessary. They will drink the condensation from the enclosure's furnishings and walls, and a small water dish can also be provided, and must be kept clean, but will usually be seldom used.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Ideal temperatures for skunk geckos range from 80 to 85 degrees F ambient temperature and an 82 to 85 degree F basking spot. Be sure to provide a daily photoperiod or light cycle of at least 10 to 12 hours. Skunk, or white lined geckos are primarily crepuscular to nocturnal, and thus do not require 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. White lined, or skunk geckos require moderate relative humidity levels, and should be maintained at, or within about 65 to 75%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, skunk geckos are insectivorous, and eat primarily insects and other invertebrates, although other smaller vertebrates may also be eaten. In captivity, feed skunk 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. 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

White lined, or skunk geckos can be handled gently and deliberately, and are less aggressive than their relatives in the same genus, the Tokay geckos (although they may still bite if they feel threatened). They are still active, flighty, and delicate skinned geckos, however. Handle any of these geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. As with many geckos and other lizards, skunk geckos can drop their tails when frightened. 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:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

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.

***Copyright, 2023**