



**Photo Credit: SandSpice*

Tokay Gecko (*Gekko gecko*)

Vocal and Full of Bark (and Bite)

Tokay geckos are a large, nocturnal arboreal gecko species that can easily be identified by their grayish to bluish base color and numerous reddish to orange spots and flecks throughout their body. They are frequently named and known for their vocalizations, which sound like “gekk-gekk-gekk”. They are an adaptable species of gecko, often being found in and near rural to suburban human habitations. Tokay geckos are known for being quite territorial, and use their vocalizations to signal their territory as well as when threatened or in distress. Furthermore, they may occur from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar, through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Tokay 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. Tokay geckos are popular reptile pets, but are better suited for the slightly more knowledgeable and experienced pet owner or enthusiast, as these geckos have strong jaws and can deliver a painful bite if handled carelessly. Despite this, Tokay geckos can make for good pets overall to maintain the terrarium.

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 gecko**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Tokay geckos can attain longevity of 10 to 15 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Tokay geckos are a large, arboreal species of gecko which range from southern to southeastern Asia. More specifically, this species can range from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar, through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. They also occur from Malaysia, southern China, and Indonesia. These large geckos are also introduced in several other areas of the world including Florida in the United States. Within these ranges, Tokay 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 and History

Gekko gekko (Linnaeus, 1758). Tokay geckos have been kept, imported, and increasingly bred in captivity for many of the past decades, as far back as at least the mid to late 1960's and 1970's, during time they were imported into the U.S. for the first time as well. They were first observed in Florida as a non-native established species by about the year 1965. However, it is difficult to determine when exactly Tokays were first kept as pets altogether, as this information is not known.

Tokay geckos, however, have long been culturally significant in many eastern Asian countries where they are native to, and have been attributed to many different qualities such as having supernatural abilities, as well as being symbolic of good luck and fertility in many Asian cultures.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Tokay geckos are large geckos that begin and range from 2.5 to 3.5 inches in total snout-to-tail length as hatchlings and juveniles to 8.0 to 15.0 inches or slightly larger as adults in total snout to tail length. Snout-to-vent length ranges up to 7.2 to 7.8 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 minimum of an 18" x 18" x 36" tall enclosure or terrarium should be used. Tokay 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 Tokay 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. Tokay 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. Tokay geckos require moderate relative humidity levels, and should be maintained at, or within 50 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, Tokay geckos are insectivorous, and eat primarily insects and other invertebrates, although other smaller vertebrates may also be eaten. In captivity, feed Tokay 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. Other feeder items, such as small, pre-killed rodents, and even house geckos and anoles can also be given on occasion, but sparingly. 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

Tokay geckos have held a reputation for being large and aggressive geckos. Most wild caught or unhandled Tokay geckos are prone to biting and attempting to escape when handled. Captive bred and born geckos may be at least somewhat more tolerant of handling, however. Handle any of these geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. As with many geckos and other lizards, these 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

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