



## Husbandry Handbook

# GARGOYLE GECKO

*(Rhacodactylus auriculatus)*

### The Horned Gecko

Gargoyle Geckos are a robust bodied yet small sized gecko measuring around 8" in total length. They derive their name, gargoyle, from the bumps on their head that resemble horns, much like the gargoyles that used to protect cathedrals and old churches. Despite their fearsome appearance and name, they are docile geckos and make great pets especially when they are handled gently and well taken care of. Selective breeding over the past 30 years has brought amazing colors and patterns to these unique geckos. Like their cousins the Crested Gecko, they are a great pet to start out with and an easy one to care for.

### Habitat

Gargoyle Geckos are native to the subtropical regions of New Caledonia. New Caledonia is a group of French governed islands found near Fiji and Australia in the Pacific Ocean. This arboreal gecko species live only in the southern portion of the main island of Grande Terre. These geckos are highly resilient to temperature variations and forgiving of most husbandry issues. Throughout their range they live in highly humid and warm climates; their habitats should be kept at 50-70% humidity with regular misting.

### Housing

Gargoyle Geckos require sealed and escape proof housing. As babies, they can start out in a Zilla® 12x12x15 Front Opening Terrarium. It's important to remember that as they grow and develop, they will require larger accommodations. Adult Gargoyle Geckos will require a Zilla® 18x18x20 Front Opening Terrarium or larger terrarium. To maintain humidity in the enclosure use substrates such as Zilla® Jungle Mix, Zilla® Bark Blend and Zilla® Coconut Husk Brick, and add Zilla® Terrarium Moss over the substrate. Arboreal branches and perches should be created for basking spots. Try Zilla® Vertical Décor to add arboreal décor to the habitat and feeding stations. These geckos will not actively drink from standing water and should be misted by hand to receive adequate hydration. A Zilla® Spring Cave can be used to provide a continuous water source but misting is still recommended. Replace the substrate, as well as clean and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings, at least every 2-3 months.

### Temperature and Lighting

Gargoyle Geckos should have a temperature gradient between 72-78°F. These geckos are hardy and cold tolerant down to 60°F. Take care to keep Gargoyle Geckos away from heat over 82°F. Gargoyle Geckos are generally nocturnal to crepuscular, but it's beneficial to provide them with the correct amount of UVA/UVB fluorescent lighting to insure their well-being. The Zilla® Pro Series Tropical 25 UVB/UVA bulb will provide the correct UVB. Without the use of proper lighting and supplementation, they can develop abnormal bone growth and other diseases.

### Feeding and Diet

In the wild Gargoyle Gecko diets have a wide range that includes insects, flowers, sap, and even small lizards. In captivity they eat a variety of invertebrates such as crickets and dubia roaches as well as powdered crested gecko diet. A fruit based and vitamin enhanced crested gecko diet like Zilla® Crested Gecko Diet makes an excellent supplement to insects to provide complete nutrition. Feeder insects should be fed a nutritional gut-load insect food and given Zilla® Gut Load Cricket Drink. When feeding, spray the insects with Zilla® Calcium Supplement and Zilla® Vitamin Supplement 1-2 times weekly for additional calcium and vitamin D3, along with other essential nutrients. These supplements can be used in crested gecko diet as well if insects aren't offered. By feeding these products you will increase the nutritional value of your feeders and help pass important nutrients on to your gecko.

### Handling

Handling of Gargoyle Geckos should be done carefully and in an area where they can't escape if they jump out of your hands. These geckos are excellent jumpers. Babies can often be flighty. Remember that to them, you're a giant predator. Approach them slowly and pick them up from below when possible. They will "drop" their tails if they are startled, their tail is grabbed, or if they feel that they are about to be eaten by a predator. While Gargoyle Geckos are beautiful and incredible pets to keep, handling them should be done carefully and diligently.

**Always be sure to wash your hands after handling or cleaning the enclosure of any animal.**

