



Gargoyle Geckos

Rhacodactylus auriculatus

BEGINNER · 7-9 IN ADULT · 15-20 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · ARBOREAL · NEW CALEDONIA

The crested gecko's stockier, knobby-headed cousin. Gargoyle geckos come from the humid forests of New Caledonia and keep almost the same way: room temperatures, a misted vertical enclosure, powdered diet from a cup. The honest differences: they're more territorial, more predatory, and unlike crested geckos they can regrow a dropped tail. A calm, hardy, genuinely beginner-friendly gecko, as long as it lives alone.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	7-9 in
Lifespan	15-20 years
Ambient temp	72-78 °F
Basking spot	80-84 °F
Night temp	68-72 °F
Humidity	60-80%
UVB	Low, recommended
Diet	CGD staple + insects 1-2x/week



Named for the bony brow bumps that give the species its gargoyle face. Captive-bred striped and reticulated forms turn up at every NARBC show.

Photo: Valentin Moser / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Temperament & Handling

Gargoyles are calm, deliberate geckos that take short, gentle handling in stride once they've settled in and are eating reliably. They can drop their tail when panicked, but unlike their crested cousins they regrow it. The catch is each other: this species is territorial and outright predatory toward other geckos. **House gargoyle geckos alone.** Lost tails and missing toes are how cohab experiments end.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Gargoyles are arboreal and climb, so enclosures run tall. But they're notably more ground-oriented than crested geckos, patrolling the lower third and the floor at night. Give every stage vertical cork and branch structure plus real floor cover. Start hatchlings small so they can find food, and upgrade as they grow; a single adult does well in an 18×18×24 and better in a 24×24×36. Screen tops help shed excess heat and humidity.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	6×6×12	8×8×12	House individually: cannibalism risk is higher than in crested geckos.
Juvenile	12×12×18	12×12×18	More ground-oriented than crested geckos, so give low branches and high perches.
Subadult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Aggressive with their own kind; always separate before sexual maturity.
Adult	18×18×24	24×24×36	More predatory than crested geckos. Will take pinkies and even other geckos.

Enclosure minimums and preferred sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; vertical orientation at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Gargoyles like it cooler than 'tropical' suggests: 72–78 °F ambient, a modest 80–84 °F basking spot, and a drop to 68–72 °F at night. Room temperature does most of the work; a small halogen or deep-heat projector on a thermostat covers the rest. Heat is the bigger danger. Sustained temps much past the basking range stress them fast, so summer heat waves deserve more worry than winter. Low-output UVB is recommended: cheap insurance for bone health, and it keeps D3 out of the dusting powder.

04

Humidity & Water

Run the enclosure at 60–80% humidity on a cycle, not a constant: mist well in the evening, let it spike, then let it dry back toward the low end by midday. Constant saturation breeds skin infections and stuck shed. Adults are a bit more forgiving than crested and tolerate 50–70%. Most gargoyles drink droplets off leaves and glass after misting; keep a small water dish anyway as the backup, not the plan.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

Recreate a humid New Caledonian forest: a moisture-holding coco fiber and soil mix on the floor, with cork rounds, angled branches and sturdy foliage building climbing routes at every height. Remember the ground game (this species hunts low), so leaf litter and a floor-level hide earn their space. Bioactive setups with springtails and isopods suit them well. Skip anything dusty or abrasive; plain paper towel is fine for quarantine and hatchlings.

06

Feeding

Gargoyles are omnivores built for convenience. A quality complete gecko diet (CGD) is the staple, offered fresh every 2 days in a small cup or ledge feeder. Insects are the supplement, not the base: appropriately sized, gut-loaded crickets or roaches 1–2 times a week, dusted with plain calcium (no D3, no phosphorus), plus a multivitamin weekly while they grow and twice monthly once adult. Without a UVB lamp, a D3 calcium replaces the plain powder those days. Remove uneaten CGD before it sours.

07

Health Red Flags

Watch the jaw and the limbs first. A rubbery mouth, kinked tail, wavy back or a gecko that trembles as it climbs points to metabolic bone disease: a calcium and UVB failure you can halt but never fully reverse. Wrinkled skin and sunken eyes mean dehydration; fix the misting cycle that day. Stuck shed rings toes and tail tip and costs digits if ignored. A gargoyle that stops eating and starts losing weight is past wait-and-see. That's a reptile-vet visit.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.