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ANGUIDS

Scheltopusik

Pseudopus apodus

Pseudopus apodus is a large, legless lizard from south-eastern Europe and western Asia that looks like a snake but has eyelids, ear openings and a stiff, armoured body. It grows to about 135 cm, is diurnal and robust, and can live for decades. It feeds on snails, insects and small vertebrates and needs a long enclosure with a diggable substrate, a warm basking spot and a brumation period.

Family: Anguidae Former name: *Ophisaurus apodus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-135 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**20-50 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**150 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-30 °C**
Basking spot	**30-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**8-12 °C** 8-12 weeks
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24 months**
Clutch size	**6-12 eggs**
Incubation	**45-55 days** at 26-29 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult needs an enclosure of at least 150 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height). The size is an estimate based on the animal's length: it moves along the ground and uses the whole floor area, so length is what matters most.

TEMPERATURE

The basking spot should have a surface temperature of 30-35 °C, and the rest of the enclosure should sit at 22-30 °C by day. At night the temperature drops to 18-22 °C, and the heat can be switched off if the room is warm enough.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Air humidity should be 40-60 %. The species comes from dry country, and the enclosure is kept mostly dry, but the substrate at one end may be slightly damp.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and basks a great deal, so it needs a warm basking spot and light for 12-14 hours a day in summer, shorter in autumn leading up to brumation.

FEEDING

Pseudopus apodus is a carnivore. In the wild the diet consists mainly of insects (mostly beetles) and snails and, less often, small vertebrates. Broad, strong teeth crush snail shells and insect armour.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Pseudopus apodus is calm and adapts well to captivity, but it should not be picked up every day.

NATIVE RANGE

Greece, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan.