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ANGUIDS

Chinese Crocodile Lizard

Shinisaurus crocodilurus

Shinisaurus crocodilurus is a rare, semi-aquatic lizard from cool, humid forests in southern China and north-eastern Vietnam, with rows of bony scales on the back and tail like a crocodile. It grows to about 40 cm, perches on branches over water and drops into the water when threatened. It needs a large aquaterrarium with cool, clean water, good ventilation and a brumation period.

Family: Shinisauridae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**35-46 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**110 × 50 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 15-20 cm
Water temperature	**18-22 °C**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**10-15 °C** 12-16 weeks
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or one male with several females**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Sexually mature	**36 months**
Litter size	**2-12 young**
Clutches per year	**1**
Gestation	**240-270 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix I**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Endangered (EN)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	An adult needs an aquaterrarium of at least 110 × 50 × 60 cm (length × width × height), a pair at least 150 × 50 × 60 cm. The water section should fill most of the floor.
TEMPERATURE	The basking spot should have a surface temperature of 30-35 °C, and the air in the rest of the enclosure is 22-28 °C by day. At night the temperature falls to 16-20 °C; the night temperature is an estimate.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Air humidity is high, 60-80 %, because most of the floor is water. Extra misting is not normally needed, but the animals become active with artificial rain.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	Water quality is crucial. Use a powerful filter, e.g. an external filter with ceramic rings, filter sponge and filter wool, and let it run for about a month before the animal moves in.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and perches on branches and stones above the water, but basks only briefly at a time.
FEEDING	*Shinisaurus crocodilurus* is a carnivore and takes both terrestrial and aquatic prey. Earthworms are a good basis for the diet.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Shinisaurus crocodilurus* is calm and can become tame, but it is not an animal for handling. Some animals step calmly onto the hand, others flee, and the bite is powerful.
NATIVE RANGE	China and Vietnam.