herpy

CAECILIANS

Congo Caecilian

Herpele squalostoma

Herpele squalostoma is a stout, burrowing caecilian from the rainforests, plantations and gardens of Central Africa, up to about 46 cm long. It lays eggs in the soil, and the female lies coiled around the eggs and young, which feed on her outer layer of skin. The species has proved hardy in captivity compared with other caecilians.

Family: Herpelidae Former name: *Caecilia squalostoma*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**24-46 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Burrowing**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Skin toxins	**None known**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 40 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**21-23 °C**
Humidity	**90-100%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Insects and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Direct development (no larvae)**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Eggs per season	**16**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	*H. squalostoma* is kept in small numbers, and the care advice is based on the species itself and on other terrestrial caecilians. The animal is terrestrial and burrowing, so care is about the soil.
TEMPERATURE	The species is kept stably warm: 22-25 °C by day and 21-23 °C at night. The average soil temperature affects how much the animals eat, so it must be kept even.
HUMIDITY AND MISTING	The air in the box is almost saturated, 90-100 %, because the soil is damp. Moisture is maintained by misting the soil and occasionally turning over the top few centimetres. Feel it, and mist when the top layer feels dry.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The species does not need a water bowl or an aquatic section. Moisture comes from the soil, and condensation on the walls of the box is enough to drink from. A water bowl can make the soil too wet.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species lives underground, and a particular lighting schedule is not necessary. The normal day-night rhythm of the room, with 10-14 hours of light, is enough.
FEEDING	Earthworms are a well-proven staple: young animals can grow into large, sturdy adults on earthworms alone when the worms are gut-loaded with calcium and vitamins.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*H. squalostoma* spends almost its entire life underground and is rarely seen on the surface.
NATIVE RANGE	Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo - Brazzaville, Congo - Kinshasa and Central African Republic.