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CHAMELEONS

Böhme's Two-horned Chameleon

Kinyongia boehmei

Kinyongia boehmei is a small, green mountain chameleon found only in the Taita Hills of south-eastern Kenya. The male has two flat, almost parallel nose horns, while the female is hornless. The species lays eggs and needs a cool, humid climate and a tall, densely planted enclosure. Its care is poorly documented, and it suits the experienced keeper best.

Family: Chamaeleonidae Former name: *Bradypodion tavetanum boehmei; Kinyongia tavetana boehmei*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-19 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**6-8 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Montane forest**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 45 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-26 °C**
Basking spot	**28 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**12 months**
Clutch size	**2-11 eggs**
Incubation	**180-360 days** at 18-22 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Near Threatened (NT)**

About the species

Kinyongia boehmei is the smallest of the East African chameleons with two nose horns. The animals are mostly bright green with blue and yellow markings that change with mood and condition. The male has two large, flat, almost parallel horns on the snout, while the female has no horns or only small protrusions. Both sexes have a few small, raised bumps at the front of the dorsal crest near the head.

The total length is up to about 19 cm, and the tail makes up more than half of it. Females stay smaller than males.

The species was described in 2002 as a subspecies of *Kinyongia tavetana*, its closest relative, and has been recognised as a separate species since 2008. The species name honours the German herpetologist Wolfgang Böhme. Several species in the group have previously been listed under *Kinyongia fischeri*, so animals in the trade are not always named correctly.

Distribution and habitat

Kinyongia boehmei is known only from the Taita Hills in south-eastern Kenya, at 1,000-2,200 m altitude. The hills form a small, isolated massif, and the species occurs nowhere else.

The species is assessed as near threatened (NT).

> **Native range:** Kenya.

HABITAT

Kinyongia boehmei lives in humid montane forest, mostly in the canopy, but also in bushes and small patches of forest between cultivated fields. The climate is cool and humid: daytime temperatures rarely exceed 30 °C, and at night they fall to 15-17 °C. The species is diurnal and waits in ambush for insects among the foliage. It drinks droplets from the leaves and does not recognise standing water as a source of drinking water.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

The care of *Kinyongia boehmei* is poorly documented, and several of the figures here are estimated from the climate of the Taita Hills.

An adult needs an enclosure of at least 45 × 45 × 90 cm (length × width × height), and bigger is better. Height matters most, because the species lives in trees and bushes. The species is territorial and is kept singly, and the animals must not be able to see each other.

Furnish the enclosure densely with live plants, e.g. *Schefflera* and *Ficus*, and with twigs and branches at several heights, so the animal can choose a basking spot and retreat into the foliage. A mesh enclosure or a glass-and-mesh enclosure gives good ventilation. The substrate is slightly moist coconut fibre, garden soil or bark. A female needs an egg-laying site (see Breeding).

Read more: Heat and temperature

TEMPERATURE

By day the temperature should be 22-26 °C with a basking spot of about 28 °C, and it must not rise above 28 °C. At night it should fall to 15-20 °C. As a montane species, it does not tolerate prolonged heat, so in hot summers the enclosure must be kept cool. Measure the surface temperature of the basking branch with an infrared thermometer.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be 60-80 %. The animal drinks droplets and cannot manage with a water bowl: use a drip or rain system, or mist the leaves several times a day. Branches and leaves must dry out during the day, so that mould does not develop. Distilled water or reverse-osmosis water keeps nozzles and foggers clean.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and needs 12-14 hours of light a day with full-spectrum light and UVB. Ferguson zone 2 is an estimate for a montane chameleon. Position the light so the animal can choose between light and shade, and replace the UVB tube regularly to prevent metabolic bone disease.

Read more: Lighting and UVB Read more: Common diseases and signs of illness

FEEDING

Kinyongia boehmei eats only insects. Good feeder insects are small crickets, grasshoppers, houseflies and fruit flies, with mealworms and waxworms now and then. The feeders must be gut-loaded with nutritious food and dusted with calcium and a multivitamin supplement.

Juveniles are fed daily. Adults get 3-6 suitably sized insects every 2-3 days. Overfeeding must be avoided.

Read more: Feeder animals: keeping and breeding Read more: Calcium, vitamins and supplements

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Kinyongia boehmei is territorial and is stressed by handling and by the sight of conspecifics. Males display with their horns and with colour changes. Do not pick the animal up without reason. If the animal stops eating, take it to a vet with experience of reptiles.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

The male is recognised by the two flat nose horns; the female is hornless or has only small protrusions. The animals reach sexual maturity after about one year.

MATING

The animals are kept together only for mating. The female is placed with the male, and the animals are kept under supervision. The male courts with his horns and with colour changes. If the female rejects him, the animals must be separated at once, and after mating the female goes back to her own enclosure.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

About two months after mating, the female starts looking for a place to lay her eggs. The clutch is 2-11 eggs. She needs a 15-20 cm deep layer of moist, diggable coconut fibre or a mix of sand and soil; otherwise she digs in vain again and again and may develop egg-laying problems, which can be fatal. Give her a balanced diet with calcium while she is carrying eggs.

INCUBATION

The eggs hatch after 6-12 months at 18-22 °C and a humidity of about 85 %. The incubation substrate must be moist, but not wet, throughout the period, otherwise the embryos die.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

The hatchlings are kept in small mesh enclosures, singly or in small groups under supervision, so that it does not become too crowded. They are fed fruit flies and very small crickets with calcium and must be misted several times a day. The air must not become stagnant.

Health and common mistakes

There is no documented knowledge of diseases in *Kinyongia boehmei* specifically. Typical problems in montane chameleons are:

- Overheating from lamps that are too hot and high temperatures.
- Dehydration from too few drinking opportunities.
- Intestinal parasites, especially in wild-caught animals.
- Respiratory infections from stagnant air.
- Metabolic bone disease from too little UVB and calcium.
- Sores and mould from branches that are wet all day.

Contact a vet with experience of reptiles if the animal stops eating, turns dark and lethargic, or breathes with its mouth open. Lifespan in captivity is given as 6-8 years.

Read more: Buying animals: captive-bred, wild-caught and transport

Always ask someone who knows

This guide is a good place to start, but it cannot replace experience. Animals differ, and much of what matters most is learned from people who have kept the species for years. Talk to a breeder, an experienced keeper or a vet who knows reptiles and amphibians before you get the animal - and again if anything looks wrong.