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GECKOS

Cat gecko

Aeluroscalabotes felinus

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is a shy, reddish-brown climber from the humid forests of Southeast Asia, which moves in the branches at night and sleeps curled up with its tail around its body. It is the only species in its genus, needs cool and humid conditions and is difficult to keep, so it suits the experienced keeper.

Family: Eublepharidae Former name: *Pentadactylus felinus; Aelurosaurus felinus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**10-18 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Rainforest and montane forest**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 30 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**20-26 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**65-90%**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**60-75 days** at 24-26 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

About the species

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is a lightly built, long-tailed gecko in a warm coffee brown to rusty red, often with white spots and a faint stripe or brown markings along the back. The underside of the throat is white, and white may continue down over the belly. It has vertical pupils and well-developed eyelids, which are a hallmark of the family of eyelid geckos. It lacks the broad adhesive lamellae that many other geckos have, but the toes have small, retractable claws and can grip around branches almost like a hand. The tail is prehensile and is used as a fifth limb when the animal climbs around in scrub and low forest.

The species name *felinus* means cat-like (from Latin *felis*, cat) and alludes to the animal's cat-like face. When it sleeps, it curls up with its tail around its body. The species was described by Albert Günther in 1864 from an animal from Singapore and is the only species in the genus *Aeluroscalabotes*. Two subspecies are recognised: *A. f. felinus* and *A. f. multituberculatus* from the Sula Islands in Indonesia. It is regarded as one of the most primitive geckos and resembles in body shape the few fossils of early geckos.

Females are larger than males. Females can probably grow to 18 cm, while males typically reach up to about 10 cm. It is unclear whether the measurements are with or without the tail, so the figures in the fact box are approximate. Weight and lifespan are not documented, and the 8-12 years in the fact box is an estimate.

The species is shy and sensitive to stress and rarely comes out while there is light. Wild-caught animals often have many parasites, and breeding in captivity is regarded as difficult. It is therefore no beginner species, and rather few people have their own experience with it.

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

Distribution and habitat

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is found in South-East Asia, mostly on the Malay Peninsula and on Borneo. The species occurs in Malaysia (the peninsula and Sarawak), Indonesia (Borneo, Sumatra and the Sula Islands), Singapore and southern Thailand, and is also reported from southern Vietnam. It may also have been found in Cambodia, but this is not confirmed.

By far the most known records are from Malaysia, with only a few from Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei. The type localities are Singapore and Borneo. The subspecies *multituberculatus* is known from Sanana on the Sula Islands. The species is not common anywhere in its range.

> **Native range:** Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei.

HABITAT

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is semi-arboreal and prefers cool, humid montane rainforest, but it is also found in lower-lying forest with running water, for example along streams and small rivers. It is strictly nocturnal and feeds on many kinds of small insects and other arthropods.

The climate in the montane forest is mild and humid all year. There are almost no measurements from the animals' own habitats, and the altitudes at which the species lives are not documented.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Keep the animals singly, in a glass or plastic terrarium. An adult needs a terrarium of at least 45 × 30 × 45 cm (length × width × height), preferably larger, because *Aeluroscalabotes felinus* is semi-arboreal and climbs a great deal.

For the substrate use orchid bark or similar gentle bark chips mixed with clean soil, which retains moisture. Provide hiding places of cork tubes and cork bark, thin branches at different heights and live or artificial plants so the animal can slip into cover. Everything in the terrarium must be non-toxic.

The species is shy, so the terrarium should stand in a quiet spot, and the animal needs many hiding places. Expect a settling-in period of four to six weeks for newly acquired animals, during which they need as much peace as possible.

TEMPERATURE

By day the temperature should be 20-26 °C and at night 18-22 °C. The species needs no basking spot, because it does not tolerate heat.

Aeluroscalabotes felinus comes from cool montane forest and is easily stressed. Keep it away from south-facing windows and warm rooms, and make sure the temperature never exceeds 28 °C. Use a digital thermometer and read it at both the top and the bottom of the terrarium. If the room is too cold in winter, a weak, thermostat-controlled heat source can be used. If it is too warm in summer, the animal must be moved to a cooler room.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity is essential. Daily misting is a must, because the animals develop many health problems if the humidity is too low. Humidity should be 65-80 % and briefly up to 90 % after misting.

Mist the terrarium every day, but do not let it stay wet all the time. Plants, bark and substrate must be able to dry out a little between sessions, otherwise mould appears. Provide a small dish of fresh water for adult animals. Use filtered or reverse osmosis (RO) water, because kidney problems in the species have been linked, among other things, to the water. A combined hygrometer and thermometer is handy, and an automatic fogger can help if ventilation is good.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is strictly nocturnal and sleeps in hiding by day, so the need for UVB is low. A weak UVB light with plenty of shade can be used, but is not necessary.

Use ordinary daylight lighting with 10-12 hours of light and the same amount of darkness at night, controlled by a timer. Avoid strong spotlights, which heat too much and dry out the air. The terrarium must have many shaded hiding places so the animal can get away from the light.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

Aeluroscalabotes felinus lives on small insects and other arthropods. Feed every other day in very small amounts, two to four small prey items per animal. Good choices are small crickets, small cockroaches, moths and other small insects that are at most as large as the distance between the animal's eyes.

Dust the insects lightly with calcium and a multivitamin, but vitamins should be used with care, at most every third feeding, because too much supplement is suspected of causing kidney problems. Precise doses for the species are not documented. Feed the insects up well for a couple of days before passing them on.

The tail is the animal's fat store. A plump tail suggests good condition, and a thin tail is a serious warning sign, especially in newly bought animals. Weigh the animal and note how much it eats.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is shy, withdrawn and sensitive to stress, and it is not an animal to be handled. Keep it singly. Keeping a pair is only for breeding and should only be tried once the animals have settled in after four to six weeks.

By day it lies curled up with its tail around its body and becomes active only after dark. Then it climbs around in the branches and uses both the grippers on its toes and the tail. Meet it with calm. Avoid carrying it around, grabbing the tail or rearranging the furnishings, and let it have many hides.

Because the species is rarely kept, its behaviour in captivity is poorly described. Keep a close eye on the animal, therefore, and note what it does.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Females of *Aeluroscalabotes felinus* are larger than males, and only males have pores in front of the vent. Sexing does require a trained eye, however. When the animals become sexually mature, and how large they must be for breeding, is not documented.

MATING

There is almost no documented information on mating in *Aeluroscalabotes felinus*. Breeding in captivity is described as difficult. The animals should only be put together once they have settled in, and only with breeding in mind. Whether the species requires a cooler rest period in winter, and how mating takes place, is not described.

Watch the animals at all times, and take the male out if the female seems stressed or bites the male. Contact an experienced keeper of the species or a society if you are considering breeding.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

Clutch size is not documented for *Aeluroscalabotes felinus*; the figure in the fact box is borrowed from related eyelash geckos, which lay one to two eggs at a time. How many clutches a female lays per year is not documented.

The female lays eggs, but whether she buries them or chooses a particular site is not known. Give her peace and a deep, damp layer of substrate or a laying box, and check regularly for eggs.

INCUBATION

Incubation is not documented for *Aeluroscalabotes felinus*. The figures in the fact box are borrowed from *Goniurosaurus hainanensis*, which belongs to the same family, and are only a guide: 24-26 °C and 60-75 days.

Place the eggs in a damp, not wet, substrate such as perlite or vermiculite, and avoid turning them. Monitor the temperature with a thermometer, and use an incubator that can hold an even temperature. Write everything down, so that the experience can be used by other keepers.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

Nothing is documented about rearing young of *Aeluroscalabotes felinus*, because breeding rarely succeeds in captivity. Keep the young singly in a small, humid enclosure with hides, and mist daily. Offer the smallest insects, for example fruit flies and small crickets, and weigh them regularly. Separate them if one grows more slowly than the others, and contact a vet with reptile experience if the animals do not eat.

Health and common mistakes

Aeluroscalabotes felinus is sensitive to stress, and wild-caught animals often have many parasites. You should be aware of the following:

- Thin, emaciated animals, especially newly bought ones. A plump tail is the best sign of health.
- Parasites in animals from the wild. Buy only animals that are captive bred, and have a faecal sample examined at a vet.
- Humidity that is too low, which causes many health problems.
- Kidney problems, which are suspected to come from poor water or too much vitamin supplement. Use filtered water, and add only a little vitamin.
- Too high a temperature, which causes stress. Keep the temperature below 28 °C.

See a vet experienced with reptiles if the animal loses weight, refuses to eat or seems lethargic. There are almost no studies of diseases in the species.

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.