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GECKOS

Pegu bent-toed gecko

Cyrtodactylus peguensis

A nocturnal gecko from Myanmar, Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia, known from the forests near Pegu. There is little reliable care information about the species, so the guide is based on experience with other species of the genus and is a cautious starting point.

Family: Gekkonidae Former name: *Gymnodactylus peguensis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**7 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**8-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 40 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**23-27 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-23 °C**
Humidity	**60-90%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**90-150 days** at 22-25 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

About the species

Cyrtodactylus peguensis is a medium-sized, slender gecko in the genus *Cyrtodactylus*. The genus name means "bent finger" and alludes to the slightly bent toes. The species was described in 1893 by George Albert Boulenger from animals collected at Palon in the Pegu region of southern Myanmar, and the scientific name refers to this place. It was originally called *Gymnodactylus peguensis*.

The largest recorded length from snout to vent is 70 mm, so adults reach about 7 cm without the tail. The total length with the tail is not documented. The species is distinguished from other species in the same group by a combination of scale counts, including the number of pores in the males, and not by colour alone, so an animal should be identified by someone who knows the genus.

The taxonomy has been in flux. A former subspecies, *C. peguensis zebraicus*, has been a separate species since 2018, *Cyrtodactylus zebraicus*, and it is not closely related to *C. peguensis*. Older information on keeping and breeding often uses the old name, so it may concern one species or the other. Animals from southern Thailand are sometimes assigned to *C. zebraicus* and not to *C. peguensis*.

Temperament, colour variants and lifespan are not documented for the species, and the 8-10 years in the fact box is an estimate. The genus has a reputation for being shy and fast, and it is wise to expect the same here.

Distribution and habitat

Cyrtodactylus peguensis is reported from Myanmar (the Pegu region and Tenasserim), Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia. The type locality is Palon in the Pegu region. The species has also been mentioned from India, but this is regarded as an error.

The distribution in Thailand and on the Malay Peninsula is unresolved, because southern populations were previously assigned to the subspecies *zebraicus*, which is now a separate species. Records of captive or misidentified animals may appear on the map.

> **Native range:** Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and Malaysia.

HABITAT

There is no detailed description of *Cyrtodactylus peguensis* in the wild. The species is regarded as a forest-dwelling gecko, and relatives on the Malay Peninsula live in lowland forest along streams and in swamp forest.

The climate in the range is tropical with a distinct rainy and dry season, but the precise temperatures and altitudes are not documented for the species. As a working assumption, the enclosure should therefore have a humid, forest-like set-up with the option of choosing between humid and slightly drier spots. The biotope in the fact box is an estimate.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

The husbandry of *Cyrtodactylus peguensis* is not described, so this guide is based on related species in the genus and on the requirements of nocturnal, climbing geckos from humid regions. An adult needs at least 60 × 40 × 60 cm (length × width × height), and a pair somewhat more. Bigger is better, because the species is active and hunts at night.

Furnish with a moist substrate of coconut fibre or peat, areas with sphagnum, branches, cork bark and plants, so that the animal can both walk on the ground and climb low. Always provide at least two hides, one near the bottom and one higher up, because species in the genus need to feel secure. Small holes in the sides give ventilation without drying the substrate out completely. The species has delicate skin, so avoid sharp objects and narrow crevices where it can get stuck.

TEMPERATURE

By day the temperature should be 23-27 °C and at night 20-23 °C, as for related species from humid forest.

A warm basking spot is not documented as a need, and the species is not known to bask. A weak heat mat on the side can help if the room is cold, but always control it with a thermostat. Watch the animal: if it hides constantly or refuses to eat, the temperature may be wrong. Measure both high and low.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Cyrtodactylus peguensis is probably dependent on high humidity. Keep it at 60-90 %, highest at night.

Mist the enclosure at least once daily, and let the surface dry out slightly in between, so that mould does not develop. Keep a layer of permanently moist substrate, for example sphagnum, where the animal can retreat. Provide a shallow dish of fresh water, changed daily. Some species in the genus lie in the water, so the dish should be large enough for the animal to sit in. Whether *C. peguensis* does so is not documented.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

Cyrtodactylus peguensis is nocturnal and does well with weak lighting. UVB is not necessary, but a weak UVB light is an advantage.

If you offer UVB, choose a weak source intended for shade-dwelling animals, and place it so that part of the enclosure is always in shade and the animal can withdraw. Keep the light on a fixed daily rhythm with about 12 hours of light, and ensure complete darkness at night. Sharp spotlights should be avoided.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

Cyrtodactylus peguensis is an insectivore. Give crickets, dubia roaches and similar insects that are smaller than the distance between the animal's eyes. Large species in the genus also take larger prey, but that is not relevant for a species of about 7 cm.

Adults are fed about three times a week and young more often. Dust the feeder insects with calcium, every second time with calcium with vitamin D3, and more often for females that are laying eggs. Feed in the evening, when the animal is active, and remove dead insects. Scatter the food so that the animal gets to hunt.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The genus has a reputation for being shy and fast, with thin, delicate skin that tears easily. If grabbed, it can bite. Handling is therefore discouraged, and an animal should always be given time to settle in after being moved. If you have to pick it up, let it crawl from hand to hand and do not squeeze.

Species of the genus are often territorial, and *C. peguensis* is therefore best kept singly. A pair can be tried if the enclosure is large with many hides, but not all pairs are compatible, and the animals should be separated at once at signs of unrest. Never keep two males together. How *C. peguensis* in particular behaves in company is not documented.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

The sexual differences in *Cyrtodactylus peguensis* have not been described in detail. Males have 8 pores in front of the vent and 17-19 pores on the thighs, so they can be recognised by them with a magnifying glass. In females the pores are absent or weakly developed.

Sexual maturity and weight are not documented for the species. As a rule of thumb for geckos of this size, the animals should be at least 18 months old before they are put together, and the female should be in good condition.

MATING

There is little experience of breeding the species in captivity, and season and rest period are not documented. Related species breed at room temperature all year round without a clear winter pause.

Introduce the male to the female's enclosure and follow the animals for the first few days. Separate them in case of biting, chasing or a female that hides all the time. Many pairs are not compatible, and a pair that does not want to should not be forced.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The species is egg-laying. Clutch size is not documented, but species of the genus almost always lay 1-2 eggs, and that is the figure in the fact box. The female probably lays the eggs hidden in the substrate under a hide.

Provide a lay box with damp sphagnum or coconut fibre. The interval between clutches is not documented. The female uses a lot of calcium, so offer calcium-dusted insects and possibly small pieces of cuttlebone, and stop breeding if she loses weight.

INCUBATION

Move the eggs carefully, without turning them, to a small box with slightly moist substrate, for example vermiculite or perlite, and place them half buried. Incubate the eggs at 22-25 °C, the cool room temperature at which the relatives are kept, and not above 26 °C.

The eggs hatch after about 90-150 days. Incubation temperature and hatching time are not documented for the species, so the figures are estimates. Be patient, and do not discard eggs that look healthy.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

There is no documented experience with rearing hatchlings of *Cyrtodactylus peguensis*. The hatchlings can probably be kept like the adults in a smaller version of the set-up.

Move them to a small box with kitchen roll or damp sphagnum and hides, and mist daily. Give small, calcium-dusted insects such as springtails, fruit flies and small crickets as soon as the animals eat. Keep the hatchlings separate if they show signs of territorial behaviour, and weigh them regularly.

Health and common mistakes

There is no species-specific knowledge of diseases in *Cyrtodactylus peguensis*. Typical problems in species of the genus and other geckos in captivity are:

- Dry air and a dry substrate, which cause skin problems and shed skin on the toes. Provide humid spots and mist daily.
- Calcium deficiency, especially in egg-laying females. Dust the food and offer calcium.
- Parasites in wild-caught animals. A faecal sample at a vet experienced with reptiles is a good idea.
- Stress from handling and too few hides, which causes refusal of food and weight loss.
- Wounds from fights if the animals are kept together.

See a vet if the animal loses weight, does not eat for several weeks or seems limp.

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.