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GECKOS

Slender feather-tailed gecko

Kolekanos plumicauda

Kolekanos plumicauda is a small, slender, nocturnal gecko from the dry regions of south-western Angola, with a tail that resembles a feather. It lives in dry, open scrub and among rocks, and almost nothing is known about its care, so this guide draws on climate, habitat and related species.

Family: Gekkonidae Former name: *Afrogecko plumicaudus; Kolekanos plumicaudus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**7-8 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**40 × 30 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**60-90 days** at 24-28 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

About the species

Kolekanos plumicauda is a small, slender leaf-toed gecko with a flattened body. Its tail has scales along the edge that sit like small feathers. The genus name is Greek and means "a long, thin person", referring to the elongated, flat body. The species was described in 2008 as *Afrogecko plumicaudus* and moved to its own genus in 2014. For a long time *Kolekanos* was a genus with only one species, until *Kolekanos spinicaudus* was described in 2022. It has pointed scales along the tail instead of feather-like ones.

The body measures about 4 cm snout-vent length, and the tail is roughly as long, so the animal reaches 7-8 cm in total. Males and females are almost the same size. When disturbed, the gecko often raises its tail and may wave the tip. It leaps easily from branch to branch when startled.

The species is known only from south-western Angola, is hardly kept in captivity, and only sparse information exists on its life. The name has changed its ending: it was first written *plumicaudus* but has since been corrected to *plumicauda*, because "cauda" (tail) is a noun whose ending is not adjusted to the gender of the genus name.

Distribution and habitat

Kolekanos plumicauda occurs only in south-western Angola, in Namibe Province (formerly Moçâmedes). It was described from the locality "Tambor" on the road towards the mouth of the Kunene River and Iona National Park. Later finds have extended the known range by more than 200 km both north and south, so that it now stretches from about 15 to 17 degrees south, from the coast near the Kunene River and inland.

The species occurs from sea level to over 2,000 m above sea level and in several different habitat types. The close relative *Kolekanos spinicaudus* lives further north in Benguela Province, about 200 km from the northernmost records of *K. plumicauda*.

> **Native range:** Angola.

HABITAT

Kolekanos plumicauda lives in very dry, sparsely vegetated country. It is found among rocks and in low, open scrub, and by day it hides under loose rock flakes and in crevices. It is a nocturnal species that clambers about on thin branches and leaps between them.

The habitat lies in the Angolan part of the Kaokoveld Desert and the adjoining dry regions and is characterised by low rainfall. The species lives in a drier and more sparsely vegetated landscape than its closest relative.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Almost nothing is known about the care of *Kolekanos plumicauda*, and the species is hardly kept outside research. The advice draws on the habitat (dry, open scrub and rocks), the size of the species and the related *Afrogecko porphyreus* and *Afroedura africana*. All figures for temperature, humidity, food, lifespan and incubation are borrowed from them.

A pair can be kept in an enclosure of at least 40 × 30 × 40 cm (length × width × height). The species climbs on thin branches and seeks out crevices, so both height and the back wall are used. Build a back wall of cork or stone with narrow crevices and lay flat pieces of cork bark at an angle. Place dry, thin branches crosswise over the full height, so the gecko can leap between them. The substrate is sand mixed with a little soil, and part of the floor must be completely dry.

The lid must be completely tight, because the gecko is flat and slender and can squeeze through very narrow openings. At the same time there must be ventilation, so the air stays dry.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation Read more: Incubating eggs

TEMPERATURE

By day the enclosure should be 24-28 °C, and a small, warm rock surface or branch may reach 30-32 °C. At night the temperature falls to 18-22 °C. A natural difference between day and night is an advantage.

Heat with a small heat lamp or a heat mat over part of the area, controlled by a thermostat, and measure with a digital thermometer, both high and low in the enclosure.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Keep the air dry, around 30-50 %, and let a few hides hold slightly more moisture so that shedding goes smoothly. Let the surfaces dry out during the day. The gecko drinks droplets from branches and stones, so mist a small part of the furnishings in the evening, and also put in a shallow dish of fresh water.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is nocturnal and lives hidden by day. UVB is not documented as necessary, but a weak UVB light for shade-dwelling animals (Ferguson Zone 1) can be given over one end, so that the rest of the enclosure is shaded. Keep a fixed daily rhythm with 12 hours of light in summer and 10-11 hours in winter, and keep it dark at night.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

The species is insectivorous. Offer small crickets, small locusts, small cockroaches and the occasional waxworm. Feeder insects must not be longer than the distance between the animal's eyes. Feed adults 2-3 times a week in the evening, and dust the insects with calcium and occasionally with vitamin D3.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Kolekanos plumicauda is quick and jumpy and not an animal for handling. When uneasy, it often raises its tail and waves the tip, and if startled it leaps between the branches. Never grab it by the tail. By day it sits hidden under rock flakes or bark. How the animals tolerate each other is not documented, so keep them singly or as pairs with plenty of hides, and separate them if there is unrest.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Age and size at sexual maturity are not documented, and the differences between the sexes have not been described in detail. As in other geckos, sexually mature males have a distinct bulge behind the vent at the base of the tail.

MATING

Mating has not been described for the species. In the close relative *Kolekanos spinicaudus*, mating takes place at night on thin branches and has been observed in August. Keep the female well fed and supplied with calcium before she is put with the male.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The number of eggs per clutch is not documented for the species, but geckos of this type almost always lay 1-2 eggs, and females of *Kolekanos spinicaudus* carry two eggs at a time. Provide a laying box with slightly damp sand or vermiculite and a narrow opening, or provide flat hides on the floor. The number of clutches per year is not documented.

INCUBATION

Incubation time and temperature are not documented for the species. The figures in the box, 60-90 days at 24-28 °C, are borrowed from *Afroedura africana*. Move the eggs carefully, without turning them, to a small box of slightly damp vermiculite, and leave it at the same temperature.

REARING THE YOUNG

Rearing of the species has not been described. Keep the young in a small box with kitchen paper, hides and a shallow dish of water. Give them the smallest feeder insects, such as springtails and small crickets, dusted with calcium, and feed them daily.

Health and common mistakes

Because *Kolekanos plumicauda* is not kept in captivity to any extent, there are no species-specific health data. The typical faults in a small, insectivorous gecko are:

- Too much heat and an enclosure without a cooler zone, which causes stress and dehydrated animals.
- Too little calcium and vitamin D3, especially in females, which causes soft jaws and tremors.
- A constantly wet substrate and too little ventilation, which cause mould and skin problems.
- Retained shed on the toes and tail tip. Provide a slightly damp hide.
- Dropped tails after handling or fighting.

See a vet with experience of reptiles if the gecko loses weight or does not eat for several weeks.

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.

The full guide with map and updates: herpy.org/en/geckos/kolekanos-plumicauda