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GECKOS

Tenerife wall gecko

Tarentola delalandii

A robust, tubercle-scaled gecko from Tenerife and La Palma that lives on cliffs, stone walls and in gardens from the coast up to about 2,300 m. Little is known about its care, so this guide is based on the climate and on the close relative *Tarentola mauritanica*.

Family: Phyllodactylidae Former name: *Platydactylus delalandii*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**12-14 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 40 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-33 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**55-98 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

About the species

Tarentola delalandii is a robust, flattened gecko with a broad head, large eyes with vertical pupils and a back covered in cone-shaped tubercles. Under the toes are adhesive lamellae, which let it walk on vertical walls and hang from ceilings. The colour is brownish grey with darker and lighter markings and can change from light to dark.

The head and body measure about 6-7 cm, and with the tail the animal reaches about 12-14 cm. Males are larger than females, and animals from the damper north side of Tenerife are larger than those from the dry south side. The tail can be shed and regrows without the large tubercles.

The species was described in 1836 as *Platydactylus delalandii* and is named after the naturalist Pierre Antoine Delalande. It belongs to the Canarian species of *Tarentola*, and *Tarentola boettgeri* and *Tarentola gigas* were formerly regarded as subspecies of it.

Distribution and habitat

Tarentola delalandii is found only in the Canary Islands, on Tenerife and La Palma, and is common on both. The original description also mentioned Madeira and Senegal, but this was an error: the other Canary Islands have their own species of *Tarentola*.

> **Native range:** Spain.

HABITAT

Tarentola delalandii lives from the coast up to about 2,300 m. It is found on rock faces, stone walls, in rock piles, scrub, woodland and grazing land, and it is also a synanthropic species that sits on house walls, in gardens and in towns. The eggs are laid under stones.

It is most active at dusk and at night and hunts insects and spiders on walls and around lights. By day it hides under stones, preferably where there is plenty of stone cover, and in summer it chooses the coolest stones. The climate is mild all year, with warm, dry summers and mild winters; at high altitude it becomes cool, and frost can occur.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Little is known about the care of *Tarentola delalandii*. This guide is based on the climate and habitat and on the closely related *Tarentola mauritanica*, which is far better known in captivity. Figures that are not known for the species are borrowed from it.

An adult needs an enclosure of at least 60 × 40 × 60 cm (length × width × height). Height and vertical surfaces matter more than floor area, because the species is a climber. Furnish the enclosure like a rock face with a back wall of cork or stone imitation, stacked slate slabs with narrow crevices, branches and at least two hides, one in the warm end and one in the cool end. Use sand or sand with fine gravel as substrate. The enclosure must be well ventilated and have a tight-fitting lid, because the animal is fast.

TEMPERATURE

The daytime temperature should be 24-28 °C, and under a lamp there should be a basking spot of 30-33 °C. At night the temperature falls to 16-20 °C. There must always be a cool end. A cool period in winter at 15-18 °C with fewer hours of light suits the climate; exact figures for the species are not documented.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The species comes from dry to semi-arid regions and manages with 40-60 % humidity. Mist the enclosure lightly in the evening and let it dry out again. Stagnant air and persistent damp cause mould and respiratory infections. A shallow dish of fresh water should always be available. A slightly damp hide helps during shedding.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

Tarentola delalandii is nocturnal and spends the day in hiding, but weak UVB lighting of 2-5 % is recommended over part of the enclosure so that the animal can choose between light and shade (Ferguson zone 2). The zone is set on the basis of its way of life and has not been measured for the species itself. Provide 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

The species takes insects and spiders. Offer crickets, small cockroaches and locusts, and occasionally waxworms as a treat. Choose insects that are smaller than the distance between the animal's eyes. Adults are fed every second or third day, juveniles every day, in portions small enough that everything is eaten. Dust the insects with calcium, and give calcium with D3 once or twice a week and a multivitamin once a week.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Tarentola delalandii is wary and not an animal to be picked up. Handling stresses it, and it sheds its tail if it feels threatened. Males defend hides and hunting territory, so never keep two males together. Keeping them singly is the safest option; a pair can live together in a large enclosure with many hides if you watch for bites and missing tails. By day the animal hides, and in the evening it goes hunting.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Sexual maturity is not documented for the species. Males are larger than females. In the close relative *Tarentola mauritanica*, sexual maturity is reached only after several years.

MATING

Mating in captivity has not been described for the species. In *Tarentola mauritanica*, the mating season follows a cool brumation of about three months. Introduce the male to the female, and remove him again if she is chased or bitten.

Read more: Brumation and the seasons

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The female lays hard-shelled eggs, normally two at a time, under stones. The number of clutches per year is not documented. Provide a laying site with slightly damp sand or vermiculite.

INCUBATION

Incubation time and temperature are not documented for the species. In *Tarentola mauritanica*, the eggs hatch at 27-30 °C after about 55-98 days, and the same method with slightly damp substrate can be used.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

Rearing of the species has not been described. The young look like miniature adults and can be reared like the young of *Tarentola mauritanica*: singly or in small groups in a small box with hides and a shallow water dish, with tiny insects every day.

Health and common mistakes

Tarentola delalandii is probably hardy, but there is no species-specific knowledge about diseases. The typical problems in species of *Tarentola* are caused by husbandry:

- Too little calcium and D3, which causes soft jaws and bent limbs.
- Too much humidity and poor ventilation, which cause respiratory infections and mould.
- Retained shed skin on the toes if the air is too dry.
- Lost tail through handling or fighting.
- Parasites in wild-caught animals.

As with many reptiles, salmonella may be present in the gut, so wash your hands after contact with the animal and the enclosure. See a vet with experience in reptiles if the animal loses weight or does not eat for several weeks.

Read more: Quarantine and hygiene 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.