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LACERTIDS

Northern Caiman Lizard

Dracaena guianensis

Dracaena guianensis is a large, powerfully built, semi-aquatic lizard from the Amazon with a green body, a reddish-orange head and a broad, laterally compressed swimming tail. It grows to nearly 125 cm and feeds almost exclusively on snails and mussels, which it crushes with flat molar-like teeth. The species needs a very large, warm and humid vivarium with a large water section and an experienced keeper.

Family: Teiidae Former name: *Teius crocodilurus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**100-125 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**180 × 90 × 120 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**27-32 °C**
Basking spot	**38-41 °C**
Temperature, night	**24-27 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
Water	**Water section** depth 30-40 cm
Water temperature	**24-29 °C**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**4-7 eggs**
Incubation	**160-180 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Only limited knowledge exists about the care of *Dracaena guianensis*, and the species is a demanding animal.
TEMPERATURE	During the day the air should be 27-32 °C. The basking spot is a strong basking branch over the water with a surface temperature of 38-41 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 60-80%. The water section and plants retain moisture, and a damp substrate helps. A misting system or a rain system that runs a couple of times a day for 10 minutes gives an even humidity in a large vivarium.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The animal must be able to lie in water and dive completely under, so the water section is a permanent part of the vivarium and not just a bowl.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Dracaena guianensis* is diurnal and basks a great deal, so it needs light, UVA and UVB for 12 hours a day.
FEEDING	In the wild *Dracaena guianensis* eats almost nothing but snails and mussels. Give snails as the staple diet: farmed land snails (e.g. *Helix* and *Achatina*) without the shell, thawed or tinned.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Dracaena guianensis* is intelligent, curious and normally calm, but it is a strong animal with a powerful bite and a hard tail.
NATIVE RANGE	Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and French Guiana.