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LACERTIDS

Paraguay Caiman Lizard

Dracaena paraguayensis

Dracaena paraguayensis is a large, heavily built, semi-aquatic lizard from the flooded lowlands of Paraguay, Bolivia and Mato Grosso in Brazil. It has a large, heavy head and flat, molar-like teeth that crush the shells of snails and mussels, its main food. Its care is hardly documented and requires a very large, warm paludarium and an experienced keeper.

Family: Teiidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**80-100 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Savanna 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	Almost nothing is known about the care of *Dracaena paraguayensis*, and the species is rarely kept and is demanding.
TEMPERATURE	By day the air should be 27-32 °C. The basking spot is a powerful 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 hold moisture, and a damp substrate helps. A fogger or a rain system that runs a couple of times a day for 10 minutes gives an even humidity in a large enclosure.
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 enclosure and not just a bowl.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Dracaena paraguayensis* is diurnal and basks a great deal, so it needs light, UVA and UVB for 12 hours a day.
FEEDING	In the wild *Dracaena paraguayensis* eats almost only snails and mussels.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Dracaena paraguayensis* is a strong animal with a powerful bite and a hard tail. Threatened animals lash with the tail and bite.
NATIVE RANGE	Paraguay, Brazil and Bolivia.