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SKINKS

African fire skink

Mochlus fernandi

A heavy, fast skink from the forests of West Africa with vivid red-orange flanks, black and white crossbars and a bronze back. *Mochlus fernandi* burrows into moist substrate, needs warmth, UVB and moist substrate, and can live for 15-20 years.

Family: Scincidae Former name: *Lepidothyris fernandi; Lygosoma fernandi; Riopa fernandi; Tiliqua fernandi*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**25-38 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**50-100 g**
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Savanna and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**25-30 °C**
Basking spot	**33-36 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**60-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3-9 eggs**
Clutches per year	**3-5**
Incubation	**55-65 days** at 30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Mochlus fernandi lives on the ground and burrows, so floor area and substrate matter most. A single animal can be kept in 90 × 45 × 45 cm, while a pair needs at least 120 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height).

TEMPERATURE

The enclosure needs a clear gradient. By day the temperature should be 25-30 °C, and at the basking spot the surface should reach 33-36 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer. The cool end should sit at about 24-26 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The species needs high humidity in the substrate: 60-70 % around the animal's hiding places, while the surface in the warm end may be drier, down to about 40 %.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and belongs to Ferguson zone 2: it basks a little and needs moderate UVB. The UV index should be about 3 at the basking spot and lower elsewhere in the enclosure.

FEEDING

Mochlus fernandi is an insectivore. The staple is crickets, supplemented with cockroaches, mealworms, silkworms, snails and other insects of a suitable size. Prey should be no larger than the animal's head.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species is fast, slippery and somewhat shy. A new animal needs at least two weeks of peace before it is handled, and it should be lifted gently from below in a closed room so that it cannot escape.

NATIVE RANGE

Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo - Brazzaville.