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GECKOS

Termite hill gecko

Hemidactylus triedrus

Hemidactylus triedrus is a small, sturdily built night gecko from southern India and Sri Lanka, with white crossbands on a brown back and rows of pointed tubercles on the back. It lives on the ground and low tree trunks, hunts termites and other small insects and is a robust but somewhat specialised species for the keeper who has kept enclosures before.

Family: Gekkonidae Former name: *Gecko triedrus; Hemidactylus subtriedrus* Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**6-8 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-8 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Dry forest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 30 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-27 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**21-23 °C**
Humidity	**55-65%**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**50-80 days** at 26-29 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

About the species

Hemidactylus triedrus is a medium-sized, sturdy gecko of the genus *Hemidactylus*. Adults measure 6-8 cm from snout to vent, with the tail on top of that. The back is light brown to chocolate brown with narrow white bands edged with black, and along the body run 19-20 fairly regular rows of enlarged, keeled, triangular tubercles. The fine transverse lamellae under the toes make it a skilled climber, but it is more ground-dwelling than many others in the genus.

The species was described by Daudin in 1802 as *Gecko triedrus*. The name *triedrus* refers to the triangular tubercles on the back. For many years it was split into several forms, including *Hemidactylus subtriedrus*, but in 2018 it was merged with the main species. At the same time, the population on Sri Lanka, which formerly went as the subspecies *lankae*, is today regarded as a separate species, *Hemidactylus lankae*. Animals from Gujarat and other parts of northern India have also been assigned to other species. Termites are an important part of the diet.

Lifespan is not documented, and the 5-8 years in the fact box is an estimate based on other *Hemidactylus* species of the same size. The species is little kept in enclosures, and not much has been published on care and breeding, so some of the advice in this guide is based on limited experience with the species and on experience with closely related *Hemidactylus* species.

Distribution and habitat

Hemidactylus triedrus lives in southern India, in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and on Sri Lanka. The type locality is restricted to Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. There are also many registered records from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The animals on Sri Lanka have been described as a separate species, *Hemidactylus lankae*, but its status is unresolved, and Sri Lanka is still counted as part of the range. Pakistan is also mentioned, including in a single report from 2003, but is not confirmed and is therefore not shown on the map. Registered records outside India and Sri Lanka may be due to confusion with closely related species. The exact range is still under debate, because several related species look very similar.

> **Native range:** India and Sri Lanka.

HABITAT

Hemidactylus triedrus lives in forest, where it moves on the ground and on the lower parts of tree trunks. By day it hides in crevices and holes in the leaf litter, between stones and under bark. At night it comes out and hunts.

The climate in southern India is hot and semi-arid with a pronounced monsoon. It is therefore a species that is used to drying out between rain showers, and not a rainforest gecko. Precise figures for temperature and humidity at the individual habitats are not documented. The enclosure in this guide is therefore based on captive experience.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

A pair can be kept in an enclosure of at least 45 × 30 × 30 cm (length × width × height). Floor area matters more than height, because *Hemidactylus triedrus* mostly moves down near the ground and on low branches. Bigger is better, especially if you want to keep several females.

A mixture of coconut fibre and dry soil works as substrate, preferably as a bioactive substrate with springtails and woodlice, which can tolerate the relatively dry environment. Lay a layer of dry leaves on top. Even small oak leaves are used as hides. Add cork bark with many crevices, flat stones and low driftwood, so that the animals can both hide and climb. Provide both humid and dry hides.

The enclosure must have good ventilation, so that it dries out between mistings. Mesh openings in the sides and top are best. The gecko is fast and can sneak out, so the lid must fit tightly.

Read more: Terrarium construction and bioactive substrate Read more: Feeder animals: keeping and breeding

TEMPERATURE

By day the enclosure should be 24-27 °C, and a small warm spot may reach 29-32 °C. At night the temperature may fall, but it should not go below 21 °C. A drop of a couple of degrees between day and night is natural.

Use a heat bulb or a heat mat on the side, controlled by a thermostat, and measure with a digital thermometer both at the hot spot and at the cool end. Give the gecko the chance to choose, so that it can seek the shade if it gets too hot. In winter, a cooler period can stimulate breeding. Precise figures are not documented for the species, but a night temperature of about 18-20 °C for one to two months seems reasonable for a species from southern India.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The humidity should be around 55-65 %, but *Hemidactylus triedrus* is a semi-arid animal, so the humidity should fluctuate and the enclosure should be allowed to dry. Mist the enclosure lightly every other day, so that there are droplets on leaves, stones and glass for the gecko to drink from. It should be dry again after a few hours.

A shallow bowl of fresh water is a good safeguard, although the animals often manage with droplets. Always keep parts of the substrate dry. The female prefers to lay eggs in dry soil, and conditions that are too wet can make her egg-bound and cause mould and skin problems.

LIGHTING AND UVB

Hemidactylus triedrus is nocturnal and does not require UVB to manage. UV light is not necessary, but does no harm, so it is optional. A weak UVB light at one end of the enclosure, with plenty of shade, can give safer calcium metabolism, especially for breeding animals, but no recommended UV zone has been established for the species.

Keep ordinary daylight or an enclosure light on for 11-13 hours, controlled by a timer, and keep it completely dark at night. Coloured night lights are unnecessary.

Read more: Lighting and UVB Read more: Calcium, vitamins and supplements

FEEDING

Hemidactylus triedrus is an insectivore. In the wild it eats termites and other small insects such as grasshoppers, beetles and spiders. In the enclosure, crickets, small grasshoppers, dubia roaches and springtails work as staples. The insects should be smaller than the distance between the gecko's eyes. For small young the crickets must be quite small, about 3 mm, and for adults about 12 mm.

Feed adults 2-3 times a week and young every day or every other day. Waxworms, butterworms and small hornworms are good as a treat, but they are fatty and should only be given now and then. Dust the insects with calcium, and use a multivitamin preparation with D3 at every second or third feeding. Breeding females need extra calcium, and you can put out a small dish of calcium powder. Do not leave live insects in the enclosure overnight.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Hemidactylus triedrus is fast and nervous, especially when young, and it is not an animal to be handled much. Short, calm handling over a low surface is best, and never grab the tail, which it can drop. It does become used to you in time. By day it stays hidden and comes out when the light is switched off.

Several females can live with a male, but how well the species tolerates company has not been thoroughly studied. Preferably keep a single animal or a pair, therefore, and only add more in a large enclosure with many hides. Always watch for bites, missing tails and falling weight. Males should not be kept together. Many geckos in the genus *Hemidactylus* are territorial.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Males can be recognised by the distinct bulge at the base of the tail and by a row of pores in front of the vent. In the row in front of the vent, *Hemidactylus triedrus* has seven to nine pores, separated by a short gap in the middle. Females lack the bulge and are usually slightly smaller and slimmer.

No figures have been published for how old or heavy the animals must be to be used for breeding. As a rule of thumb for geckos of this size, wait until the animals are fully grown and the female is in good condition with a plump tail. The thickness of the tail shows her condition.

MATING

Breeding usually succeeds without major problems when the animals are healthy. A cooler period, known as brumation, is recommended to get breeding going. The exact length and temperature are not documented, so stick to a cautious cooling for a few weeks and always let the animals have water.

After the rest period the temperature and day length are raised again, and the animals are fed well. Put the male in with the female and watch the first nights. If the female is pressed or gets bitten, they must be separated. Take the female out of breeding if her tail becomes thin.

Read more: Brumation and the seasons

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The female buries her eggs in the substrate about every third to fourth week in the season. Clutch size has not been described, but geckos of this size normally lay 1-2 white, fragile eggs at a time, and that size is therefore borrowed from the genus's normal practice and not documented for the species.

Give the female a lay box with slightly damp, but not wet, coconut soil or vermiculite, and make sure there are dry patches elsewhere in the substrate. Females that cannot find a good spot become egg-bound. The eggs are very delicate, and they must not be turned or shaken if they are moved.

INCUBATION

The eggs are carefully moved to a small box with slightly damp vermiculite or perlite and laid so that the side facing up keeps facing up. No incubation time or temperature has been published for *Hemidactylus triedrus*. The figures in the fact box, 26-29 °C and about 50-80 days, are borrowed from common practice for other *Hemidactylus* species and should be seen as an estimate.

A stable temperature in a small incubator is best. Keep the substrate slightly damp, and check the eggs without moving them. Eggs that collapse and become dark are usually dead. If you are in doubt, wait a little longer before removing them.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

The young are about 4 cm long at hatching and should have their own small box or a small enclosure with kitchen roll or slightly damp coconut substrate, hides and a shallow bowl for water. Mist lightly every day. For the first few days they live off the yolk sac and then begin to hunt.

Offer the very smallest crickets or springtails daily or every other day, dusted with calcium and vitamins. Weigh them and follow growth, and move them up to a larger enclosure gradually. The young are fast and can sneak out, so be careful with the lid. Preferably keep them separately if they begin to bite one another's tails. The precise growth and age at sexual maturity are not documented.

Health and common mistakes

There is almost no species-specific health knowledge, but the problems resemble those in other ground-dwelling geckos. The typical mistakes are:

- Too little calcium and vitamin D3, especially in breeding females and young. It causes soft jaws, bent limbs and tremors. Dust the insects.
- Too damp a substrate and poor ventilation, which cause fungus, mould and skin problems. *Hemidactylus triedrus* is a semi-arid animal and needs dry patches.
- Egg binding, when the female does not find a suitable, dry place to lay eggs. She becomes lethargic and gets a swollen belly.
- Shed skin on the toes and tail tip after shedding. Provide a humid hide, and loosen it with lukewarm water.
- A dropped tail after bites or rough handling. It only partly grows back.

A healthy animal has clear eyes, a plump tail and a good grip. See a vet experienced with reptiles if the gecko loses weight, does not eat for several weeks or seems limp.

Read more: Common diseases and signs of illness

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.