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GECKOS

Turnip-tailed gecko

Thecadactylus rapicauda

One of the largest geckos in the Americas: a nocturnal ambush hunter with no movable eyelids, vertical pupils, a blue tongue and a tail that grows back thick as a turnip after a loss. The species is widespread from Mexico to Brazil, but is rare in vivaria, and little reliable information on care exists.

Family: Phyllodactylidae Former name: *Gekko rapicauda; Gekko laevis; Platydactylus theconyx* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**9-13 cm** snout-vent length
Weight	**16-40 g**
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Dry forest and rainforest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 45 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-31 °C**
Temperature, night	**21-24 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**150-200 days** at 24-28 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	There is little experience of the species in captivity, so the dimensions are based on the general requirements for nocturnal, climbing geckos from humid regions.
TEMPERATURE	The species is active within a relatively narrow temperature range. By day 25-28 °C is suitable, and a slightly warmer spot of 30-31 °C at the top of the enclosure gives the animal the opportunity to choose.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species needs high humidity. In the wild about 60 % is given as ideal, and 60-80 % is a sensible target in the enclosure, where humidity rises after misting in the evening and falls during the day.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is nocturnal and hides in dark crevices by day, so UVB is not necessary when the food is given calcium and vitamin D3.
FEEDING	In the wild the species is an ambush hunter with a very broad diet.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The animal is slow and deliberate when not threatened, but can be quick and aggressive when disturbed. It can bite hard, and it drops the tail under even slight pressure.
NATIVE RANGE	Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Brazil, Trinidad & Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao, Caribbean Netherlands, Antigua & Barbuda, St Lucia and Grenada.