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CHAMELEONS

Parson's Chameleon

Calumma parsonii

Calumma parsonii is regarded as the heaviest chameleon in the world. The male grows to 65 cm, weighs 500-700 g and carries two wart-like horns on the snout. The species lives in the rainforest of eastern and northern Madagascar, can reach almost 20 years of age and is slow and calm. It needs a large, humid and cool enclosure and is only for the experienced keeper.

Family: Chamaeleonidae Former name: *Chamaeleo parsonii; Chamaeleo madecassus* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**45-65 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**500-700 g**
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 120 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-27 °C**
Basking spot	**27-30 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**50-100%**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-36 months**
Clutch size	**20-60 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**400-780 days** at 22-24 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Near Threatened (NT)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	An adult needs an enclosure of at least 120 × 60 × 120 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better; a whole room or a large aviary is not too much.
TEMPERATURE	The daytime temperature should be 22-27 °C. At the basking spot 27-30 °C is acceptable. The night should be cool, 18-20 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be highest at night: 90-100 % at night and around 50 % during the day. Figures for the day vary from 50 to 70-90 %.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and needs strong light 12 hours a day. A T5 HO tube at 6,500 K or a powerful LED lamp over the whole length of the enclosure provides the light. UVB is essential.
FEEDING	*C. parsonii* is an insectivore and eats large insects: adult crickets, cockroaches, locusts, stick insects, silkworms and beetles.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is kept singly for life. Males are territorial and must not be able to see each other. A pair is put together only briefly for mating, and the animals are separated again at signs of unrest. The animal is slow and calm.
NATIVE RANGE	Madagascar.