

No. 24

Long Tailed Skinks

(A small lacertid lizard from S.E. Asia.)

Takydromus sexlineatus

An Introductory Information. Leaflet from

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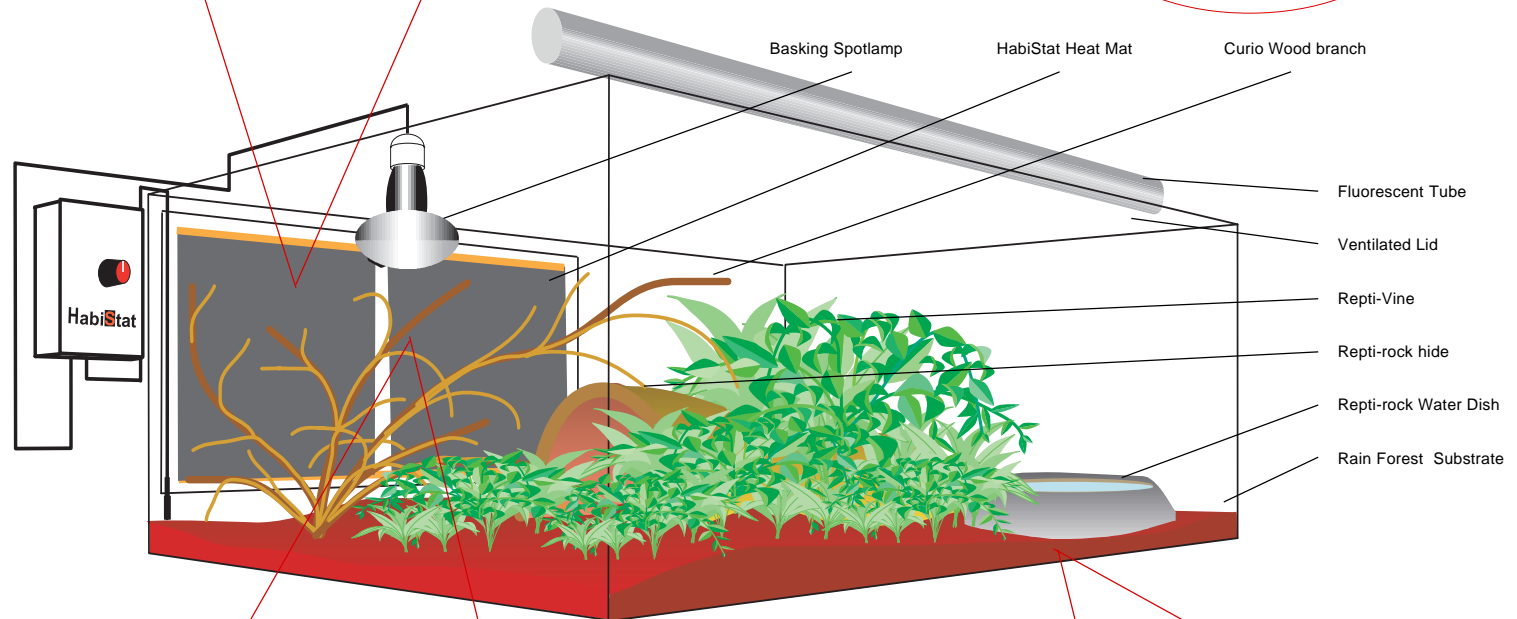
Background Heat

Use a heat mat between half and two thirds the size of the cage to provide background heating. The hottest spot in the cage should not be above 35°C while the coolest should not be below 25°C. Use a HabiStat Mat - Stat if the temperature is too hot but put the whole cage in a cooler place if the temperature is not cool enough.

Food: Crickets, Locusts, 'White' Mealworms, Fruit Fly, and as a special treat Waxworms. Supplement livefoods by dusting insects with *Repton* or feeding *Cricket Diet Plus & Mealworm Diet Plus*. These lizards will also lick a few drops of sweet fruit or nectar now and again. Use either a suitable fruit baby food or a nectar substitute prepared for birds, both of which can be supplemented with *Reptavite*. A few drops of *Reptasol* could be added to the drinking water now and again. Water should be fresh and changed every couple of days. Most lizards will lick water droplets off the foliage after spraying.

Cleanliness and Hygiene:

A routine cleaner for all non-porous surfaces could be *Vetaclene*. Anything that cannot be easily cleaned should be thrown away and replaced. Any little graze or blemish on the animals themselves would benefit from the first aid afforded by dabbing the wound with *Vetadine*. As far as human hygiene is concerned, *Vetasept Surgical Scrub* will clean hands and surfaces while *Vetasept Hand Rub* will allow adequate cleansing and disinfection even in cases when water is unavailable.



Hot Spot A local area of higher temperature can be created with a Basking Spotlamp or a ceramic heater. Use the former in conjunction with a *HabiStat Dimming* thermostat and the latter with a *HabiStat Pulse Proportional* thermostat for precise control. Hot spots should be maintained for the same day length as the lights, sixteen hours in summer, eight in winter.

A vivarium suitable for Long Tailed Skinks

Cage Decor: Fine Rain Forest Substrate, should be used as the cage base. These will blot up and 'clump' any fouling by the lizards. *Cork Bark Logs* or *Curio Wood* could be used to make an interesting three dimensional display. Draping *Repti-Vines* in the cage will provide climbing structures and refuges the lizards can hide in or move through to loosen shedding skin. *Repti-rock* caves and water dishes would lend even more functionality and security.

Cage Set Up The cage should be set up to allow an active lizard plenty of scope to climb, bask in a hot spot, move to a cooler spot, drink and hunt for food. The lizards should also be able to secrete themselves into refuges and rub themselves against something when shedding their skin.

Shopping List

Not every thing is needed to begin with, usually one item from each of the categories marked •. Try alternatives as your collection and experience grows.

- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** (4x5/4w, 6x11/7w, 11x11/12w, 17x11/20w, 23x11/28w, 29x11/35w, 35x11/42w & 49x11/55w) & **Strips** (17x6/10w, 23x6/15w, 35x6/22w & 47x6/30w)
- **HabiStat, Power Plate** (12x8/60w)
or **Pearlco Bulb Ceramics** (60w, 100w, 150w, 250w, Reflectors & Holders)
or **Pearlco Trough Ceramics** (150w, 250w & Connectors)
or **Basking Spotlamps** (Ordinary, Daylight or Red types at 60w or 100w & Connectors) BC or ES fitting
- **Thermometers** (Alcohol, dial, minimum - maximum & electronic digital)
- **Hygrometers** (Dial & electronic digital)
- **HabiStat Thermostats** (Mat-Stat/100w, Temperature/300w, Twin/2x300, Pulse Proportional/600w, Dimming/600w & Night Time Drop Function)
- **Repti-rock Dishes, Hides & Caves**
- **Repti-Vines**
- **Rain Forest Substrate**
- **Cork Bark**
- **Curio Wood**
- **Reptile Leashes** (XX Small)
- **Arcadia Reptile D₃ Lights**
or **Arcadia Natureal Sunlight Lights**
or **Activa Professional Lights** (18"/15w & 24"/18w)
or **Black lights** (18"/15w & 24"/20w)
Arcadia Control Units (15w, 2x15w, 18w, 2x18w, 20w & 2x20w)
- **Small Crickets**
&/or **Small Locusts**
&/or **Mealworms**
&/or **Fruit Fly**
Waxworms
- **Mealworm Diet Plus**
Cricket Diet Plus
- **Repton**
Reptavite
Reptasol
- **Vetaclean**
Vetadine
- **Vetasept Surgical Scrub**
Vetasept Hand Rub
- **Hand Spray**
- **Books & Leaflets**

Long Tailed Skink...

...Biology

Long tailed skinks are small lizards in the family Lacertidae and are not skinks at all. They come from Asia where they live in long grass. Normally these little lizards are active during the day at any time the temperature is within their preferred range.

They are very slender lizards with a tail of more than three quarters the total length which may be as long as 300mm.

In common with other lizards they can shed their tails if caught by them but they will regrow again in time.

...Housing

Long tailed skinks are best housed in a tallish cages as they naturally climb, that is they live in grass and low shrubs. The cage should be set up in a manner similar to the diagram overleaf. If done correctly there will be a hot spot near 32°C, while the coolest part of the cage could be nearer 25°C. The hot spot should only operate during the day. White and UV light should be present for a similar period; about sixteen hours in summer dropping to ten in winter.

Much of the success achieved in keeping lizards will come from the skilful manipulation of ventilation. The lizards require highish humidity but cannot stand damp stagnant or wet conditions. Fresh air moving into the cage is essential. Use the upward draughts caused by heated air rising to flush out the cage and drag fresh air in. A light daily misting with a hand sprayer will provide the humidity required.

...Husbandry

Long tailed skinks should be kept as pairs or if space allows, a few females with one male. Males may fight if within about three feet of one another. In Pet Shops they usually do not fight as they are temporarily housed in densities where aggression is suppressed.

To handle these animals, the whole lizard should be gently grasped and held in the hand or between the fingers. Do not grab the easily shed tail.

In time the cage will begin to look scruffy as faeces and urates are deposited. As everything recommended for the cage is washable or disposable, a good clean out is easily done. The cage set up advised in this leaflet is practicable and can be made to look pleasing to the eye. If a more natural set up is envisaged, it may be best to wait until some

experience is gained. In any case, some of the very informative books on lizards could be investigated.

...Food & Feeding

Small insects like small crickets and locusts form the staple diet in captivity. 'White' freshly moulted mealworms can also be picked out and fed. The yellow, ordinary mealworms are too indigestible. To balance the nutrients, dust the insect food with *Repton*. Aim to give the insects a fine 'ghost' like covering and feed immediately before the insects can clean the supplement off. Alternatively, both crickets and mealworms can be fed *Cricket Diet Plus* and *Mealworm Diet Plus* respectively to 'load' the insect with vitamins and minerals. To avoid over dosing, either dust or gut load but do not do both! Other insects that are eaten include Fruit Fly and Waxworms but these are best given only occasionally as a treat. Sweet fruit pulp and nectar are also eaten, see overleaf for more details.

Feed the lizards every other day with just enough to be completely eaten in fifteen minutes. Try not to leave an excess of uneaten insects in the cage.

A water dish kept full of fresh water should always be available. Most small lizards, however, will only drink from droplets of water on leaves etc. A light daily misting with a hand sprayer will provide these and give the required humidity.

...Reproduction

To sex long tailed skinks look at the tail of the animal. In males there is a hemipenal bulge posterior to the vent. The males are also generally larger, and more brightly coloured.

Eggs are laid after mating, as many as ten at a time, several times during the summer. They hatch in five to six weeks if incubated at 30°C.

...Health & Disease

Long tailed skinks live for about two to three years in nature but as many will already be adult when purchased, no real estimate of life expectancy as pets can be made. They do not suffer from many diseases and veterinary attention is rarely needed. An environment and diet as described in this leaflet will preclude most problems. Good practice, hygiene and first aid will probably deal with rest. If real disease is discovered, a vet must of course, be consulted. Pet lizards do not pose a real threat to human health. All the normal hygiene precautions regarding humans and animals should, however, be observed.