



## Leopard Gecko

Kingdom: Animalia  
 Phylum: Chordata  
 Subphylum: Vertebrata  
 Class: Reptilia  
 Order: Squamata  
 Family: Gekkonidae  
 Genus: *Eublepharis*  
 Species: *macularius*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

### Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The leopard gecko is found in semi-desert, scrub areas, and rocky outcrops in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. They live on the forest floor under logs, rocks, leaf litter, and in cool holes.
- **Exhibit Location:** Zoo to You Collection

### Characteristics

- The leopard gecko has a long, narrow body with a wide, short, fatty tail. The body's yellow background color has dark spots and blotches. A captive bred gecko comes in different patterns and color mutations.
- Length: 7-10 inches
- Unlike most geckos, they have movable eyelids and non-adhesive toes.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 15 years; **In Captivity** 20 years (record is 29+ years)

### Behaviors

- Leopard geckos are opportunistic feeders, meaning that they will not go out in search of prey, but will stalk prey once in sight.
- These geckos are nocturnal (active at night) and spend most of their time hiding in wood or under rocks. They are more terrestrial (spending time on land) than geckos with adhesive toes.
- All geckos lick their eyeballs, although the reason is unknown.
- Leopard geckos are not as aggressive as other species, although the males are territorial and can be aggressive to other males.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** none

### Reproduction

- Leopard geckos reach sexual maturity at 1 ½ - 2 years of age.
- Breeding season is from January through September. Females can store sperm in their oviducts for up to a year until conditions are right.
- The female lays clutches 3-6 times per breeding season and buries them. The incubation period is 2 months. Sex is linked to egg incubation temperature. Cooler temperatures of less than 82 degrees F produce females; warmer temperatures of 90-92 degrees F produce males. The clutch size is 1-2 eggs (usually 2). When the young hatch, they are approximately 3.5 inches long. The young will eat their first shedding, which is of high nutritional value.

### Diet

- **In the Wild:** bugs, worms, small mice, spiders, scorpions
- **At the Zoo:** mealworms, crickets, pinkie mice, superworms

### Conservation Status

- This gecko species is very common in the wild and captivity. However, numbers decline with human encroachment into their habitat.
- Predators: foxes, snakes, birds of prey

### **Did You Know?/Fun Facts**

- Leopard geckos are spotted to blend into their habitat and break up their body outline as protection from predators.
- If seriously disturbed or grabbed by the tail, it can break off, continuing to wiggle. If lucky, this distracts the predator while the gecko makes a hasty getaway. It can then regenerate its tail, but the new one is not as attractive.
- If unable to find food for a long period of time, the leopard gecko can live off the fat reserves stored in its tail. They can also go quite a while without water as they get much of their water needs from the prey they eat.
- When attacking prey, it wiggles its tail just before striking.
- Also known as the “spotted fat-tailed gecko.”
- Leopard geckos shed regularly as they grow and eat their shed for its nutritional value.
- They use the same area in their enclosure as a bathroom spot (“born potty trained”).

### **Sources:**

- Long Island Herpetological Society, (2002). Leopard geckos (scientific name: *eublepharis macularius*). Retrieved Oct. 01, 2005, from Long Island Herpetological Society Web site: <http://www.lihs.org/files/caresheets/sheet12.htm>.
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