

Care Sheet:

Duvaucel's gecko



Duvaucel's gecko (*Hoplodactylus duvaucelii*)

Adult Size: 100mm to 161mm SVL.

Threat status: 'At Risk – Relict'.

Lifespan: over 50 years.

Habitat: coastal forest, flaxland, deep rock piles, boulder beaches, rock crevices, tree hollows, under loose bark, logs

Permit Level: Insurance population species.

Enclosure:

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 70x70x150cm (LxWxH).

Ideal Group Size:

1:1 (M:F).

Compatible Species:

Robust skinks, McGregor's skinks, Falla's skinks (though authorisations usually prohibit the housing of these large skink species with other species).

Recommended Cage Furnishing:

The enclosure should be decorated with live plants such as flax, taupata etc., a network of large branches for climbing, and a layer of leaf litter for foraging. Duvaucel's geckos are both terrestrial (ground-dwelling) and arboreal (tree-dwelling), so structures such as logs, plants and rocks should be placed to allow the geckos access to the entire space within the enclosure. The logs branches and plants should be robust and sturdy enough to withstand the weight of an adult gecko (up to 118 grams!). A thick layer of moist leaf litter or bark should cover the ground and fresh water provided at all times. Refuges sites that have proved popular in captivity include sections of large bamboo (hole diameter 4 cm+), stacks of bark, hollow ponga logs, stacks of wooden boards with spacers in-between (providing a 3-4 cm gap) and sections of polythene pipe with one end blocked. Duvaucel's geckos are primarily nocturnal but will sun-bask cryptically during the day.

Breeding:

Mating generally occurs in September to October, with one or two young born from late February until the end of April. It is advisable to house the geckos in pairs (or trios – 1 male + 2 females). In the wild, maturity is generally reached in 6-7 years, however some animals have been known to breed at as young as two years old. Breeding can occur every year in captivity however this may not be true for wild populations. It is advisable to remove new-born geckos from the adult enclosure, as adults have been known to cannibalise their young (though this is considered rare). New-born young can be fed flies, crickets, moths, grasshoppers, and small cicadas from birth given their larger size (~50mm SVL at birth).

Diet:

In the wild, Duvaucel's geckos eat large-bodied invertebrates (e.g., weta, ground beetles, moths, cockroaches, etc.), and lick sweet nectar and honeydew from plants. They will also eat the ripened fruits of Kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*) and *Coprosma* spp. In captivity if native fruits are hard to come by, they can be provided a mix of watered-down fruit puree with the addition of calcium and reptile vitamins, commercial fruit puree is high in calories so they should not be overfed on this, in order to avoid obesity. It is recommended that larger prey items such as moths, spiders, cicadas, crickets and locusts are regularly provided. As well as soft sweet fruits (e.g., banana, pears) and honey water with sufficient reptile supplements (calcium and vitamins) added.

Notes:

- 'Northern' and 'Southern' (Cook Strait) populations of Duvaucel's geckos are both represented in captive collections, these groups should be maintained separately and not be inter-bred.
- The nocturnal nature of Duvaucel's geckos can make observing them in an enclosure difficult, however once settled in, they should venture out during the day to catch some mid-afternoon sun.
- They are easy to handle but be careful, because their bite has been known to draw blood.
- The species is relatively easy to care for. The only difficulty likely to be encountered is the regular supply of larger prey items.



Example cage design / set-up for a pair of Duvaucel's Geckos. This cage design includes plantings of Astelia fragrans, Coprosma rhamnoides, and Blechnum novaezealandiae. A network of large branches is provided for climbing. Refuges include several bamboo hides (2 suspended and several on the ground), and hollow ponga logs at ground level.



Young adult male 'Northern' Duvaucel's Gecko in front of example set-up.