

Your fun and easy way[®] to
get to know—and nurture—your gecko

Leopard Geckos

FOR

DUMMIES[®]

A Reference for the Rest of Us!



Liz Palika

Author of Turtles and Tortoises For Dummies[®]

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get to know—and nurture—your gecko*

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Leopard Geckos For Dummies

by Liz Palika



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About the Author

Liz Palika has written 45 books in the pets field; including *Turtles & Tortoises For Dummies*. She has written several books on reptiles, including iguanas, bearded dragons, turtles, and tortoises. Several of her books have won awards from Dog Writers Association of America, Cat Writers, Purina, ASPCA, and the San Diego Book Writers. She has about 1000 magazine credits, including *Newsweek*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and all of the major pet publications, including *Reptiles* magazine. Liz and her husband, Paul, share their home with a breeding colony of leopard geckos, as well as a variety of other reptiles and amphibians, plus 3 dogs and 3 cats.

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Chapter 1

Leaping into Leopard Geckos

In This Chapter

- ▶ Looking at geckos worldwide
 - ▶ Focusing on leopard geckos
 - ▶ Examining their anatomy
-

Leopard Geckos For Dummies

First Things First: Using This Book

Leopard Geckos For Dummies is a reference, so you don't have to read it in order from start to finish. Begin with Chapter 4 if you need basic set-up information, flip to Chapter 6 if you're trying to understand leopard gecko behavior, or head to Chapter 2 if you're still on the fence about adding a leopard gecko to your family. (Although those of you who prefer to start at the beginning and read until you reach the back cover are welcome to do so. I'll never tell.)

As you read, keep an eye out for text in *italics*, which indicates a new term and a nearby definition — no need to spend time hunting through a glossary. You'll also run into a few sidebars (the occasional gray box); although the information in the sidebars is good, it's not essential to the discussion at hand, so skip 'em if you want to.

While reading *Leopard Geckos For Dummies*, be on the lookout for these icons sprinkled here and there:



These are great time or money-saving ideas.



This is basic information for caring for your leopard gecko.



This is important stuff that can affect your leopard gecko's health or well-being.



Here is some advanced information that may interest you.

This small book is crammed full of information on leopard geckos, from how to decide whether this is the right pet for you, to choosing the right leopard gecko, caring for him, and even how to breed that pet in the future. This book can be your reference for many years to come. Just keep reading.

Taking a Look at Gecko Ecology

Geckos are lizards. They have four legs and are primarily (but not entirely) insectivores (they eat insects).

However, those are about all the generalizations that can be made. Some geckos are ground dwellers while others live in trees. A few species of geckos live in arid deserts while others prefer more humid tropical environments. Most eat insects, but some also eat fruits and nectars. Many geckos are known for having sticky feet and the ability to walk straight up glass, but not all have this ability. Some geckos have immoveable eyelids while others do not. Geckos are amazing lizards, and it's this variety that makes them so fascinating.

Charting gecko evolution

Geckos belong to the family scientists call Gekkonidae. Ancestors of today's geckos thrived during the Jurassic period but unfortunately, fossils of such tiny creatures from that era are hard to find so their true evolution during that era is unknown. However, fossils have been found from the Eocene period (beginning 50 million years ago) that showed that the ancestors of today's geckos were adapting to many different habitats. In addition, those changes were occurring as those habitats themselves were changing. During the beginning of the Eocene period, Australia and South America were still one huge continent. It's amazing to realize that the ancestors of today's geckos survived such world-changing events as the splitting and relocation of two major continents.



The *family* of geckos, Gekkonidae, belongs to the *order* (group) of lizards called Squamata, and the *class* called Reptiles.

Mapping geckos around the world

Geckos today are found in North America, South America, Central America, Africa, the Mediterranean regions, Madagascar, Asia, the Far East and many islands in the Pacific. Some of these populations evolved in those locations, but many more were transported there as people themselves traveled more. Sailing ships and the introduction of world trade spread many geckos to the four corners of the world. Some of these reptilian travelers died during the voyage, of course, and many others died in the new locations. But the ability of geckos to adapt to new conditions allowed enough to survive to establish new populations.

Today, geckos can be found in many different places:

- ✓ Tokay geckos are from Southeast Asia; north through Japan and up to Korea. Introduced populations have been seen in Florida.
- ✓ Tropical geckos (referring to their common name) originated in South Africa, and have been introduced and are thriving in Central America and other ports.