

# Species Spotlight Saturday

Madagascar Velvet geckos- *Blaesodactylus* species.

*Blaesodactylus* are a little known genus, and often overlooked. Most that are seen available currently are still imported specimens from Madagascar, but an increasing number of people have taken interest in establishing breeding colonies, and are seeing success. It is worth noting that there are multiple species in the genus that can be found in the trade, which share similar care requirements, but some are drastically different in size as adults. *Blaesodactylus boivini* and *B. sakalava* are the two you will find with some frequency, and there are a few *B. antongilensis* being worked with as well.

All members of the genus are from the northern end of Madagascar, where they inhabit the deciduous forest. So opposed to other commonly kept Malagasy species, which favor temperate-tropical humidity levels and cooler temperatures, *Blaesodactylus* prefer lower, moderate humidity, with higher temperatures.

They will actively bask in areas around 90F, certainly utilize UVB, and are quite active. So larger enclosures are certainly favorable. In general, many will eat meal replacement powders, such as pangea or repashy, but they do prefer live insects.

Aside from these temperature and humidity nuances, their care is otherwise rather overlapping with other arboreal Malagasy species. They prefer ample climbing surfaces in the form of branches or cork rounds, and do very well in bioactive vivariums. They can be housed in small groups, but it is worth noting that females can be exceptionally territorial toward one another. So groups should be introduced



Brought to you by Gecko Labs



### S1.E11: *Blaesodactylus*

all in a new, neutral environment that they establish together, opposed to placing a new female into an enclosure already containing a pair, for example.

Since they do seem to prefer being slightly drier, spraying should be light daily, to provide drinking water, and a heavier spraying once a week to maintain the moderate humidity levels.

We mentioned above that they can be drastically different sizes as adults. For reference, *B. boivini* can reach lengths comparable to leachianus geckos (14-16 inches), while *B. sakalava* tend to top out around 8 inches and are similar in size to golden geckos.



All of this sounds pretty simple, right?! So why haven't they taken off as a more popular species? Their incubation times are longer than the typical hobbyist wants to deal with, especially in combination with the space they should be allocated.

*Blaesodactylus boivini* eggs tend to take around 180 days to hatch, while *B. sakalava* eggs will take around 100 days. But, the females do lay relatively frequently, with peak laying season producing a clutch of two eggs roughly every 3-6 weeks, with *B. boivini* having longer intervals between clutches than *B. sakalava*. And incubation being in a humid chamber, but on dry substrate, to avoid direct contact with the moisture. The substrate is moist in the photo here because the photo was taken after giving the hatchling a light misting after finding it.

Brought to you by Gecko Labs

