

Panther Chameleon

Scientific Name: *Furcifer pardalis*

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Chamaeleonidae



An unusually shaped lizard which can reach a length of 12". The trunk is excessively flattened from side to side which helps them absorb radiation (sun heat) during the early and late portions of the day but avoid it during the hottest times. The tail is prehensile and when not in use is usually coiled. The feet consist of two opposed sets of fused digits (are shaped like a V) for gripping. Eyes are large, almost entirely covered with skin with only a small central aperture for viewing. The eyes can be moved independently of one another so the lizard can look in two directions at once. The tongue can be extended to a length equal to that of the body, and ends in a muscular and sticky tip with which to catch prey. The extension process can

be accomplished in 1/16 of a second. An extremely aggressive and territorial chameleon. When confronted with a rival male, the lizard will swell to an imposing size and angle its body so that the flank faces the enemy. The colors change rapidly to angry reds and yellows. It then opens its mouth to display the contrasting colors of the mucous membranes.

Range

East and Northern coasts of Madagascar, some surrounding small islands

Habitat

Hot, humid forest

Gestation

Incubation - 240 days

Litter

30-50 eggs

Behavior

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Reproduction

Females will move through the territories of several males. After mating she will change color to black with red stripes to indicate her gravid status, gaping and hissing at any male who fails to note her color. She will go down to the ground and dig a tunnel that is as deep as she is long and lay her eggs. This is accomplished in broad daylight, and is therefore very hazardous due to the lack of coverage and camouflage. After laying her eggs she fills the tunnel and taps the ground with her feet. She may mate and lay several clutches per year. The young begin to hatch after approx. 240 days and claw their way to the surface. The last may not hatch until 7 weeks after the first. The fingernail-sized hatchlings are ready to hunt from the moment of emergence.

Wild Diet

Insects