

# Crested Gecko

## *Correlophus ciliatus*

### Natural History



**Description:** Crested Geckos (sometimes called “Eyelash Geckos”) are a rainforest lizard found in only a few disjointed populations scattered across the island of New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean. They are named for their distinctive spines along their back and head, which gives the appearance of eyelashes. These geckos display a great deal of variability in their coloration and patterning even in the wild, ranging from bright orange and brindled to solid pale colors. In adulthood they are on average about 8 inches from snout to tail-tip.

**Breeding:** These reptiles have never been observed mating in the wild, but we can infer a great deal about their mating habits from their popularity in captivity. Males will spar for female attention during mating season, which lasts 8-10 months out of the year. After mating, females will lay eggs in clutches of 2. They also may lay multiple clutches before mating again, as they retain genetic material from previous partners. Neither parent provides any additional care after laying the eggs, which hatch after 60-150 days. Interestingly, the temperature of incubation may determine the sex of the hatchlings, similar to other reptiles like crocodiles.

**Distribution:** Crested Geckos were first described in 1866 when New Caledonia was first colonized by the French. After their initial description, they were not seen again and presumed extinct. Then, over 100 years later they were “rediscovered” after a tropical storm. Despite their ubiquity in the pet trade, we still know very little about how many individuals exist in the wild. It’s estimated that the entire wild population is in a space around 1,600km<sup>2</sup>. For scale, that’s a little over half the size of Rhode Island.

**Habitat:** During the daytime, these little lizards spend time on the forest floor, covering themselves with leaves and other detritus. At night, they use their gripping toe-pads to scale the lower canopy in search of food. Their webbed feet help them to jump, and their semi-prehensile tail helps them to stop by gripping on to leaves and branches.

**Diet:** Crested Geckos are omnivorous, with a diet consisting of insects, nectar, and fruit.

**Lifespan:** Little is known about the wild habits of Crested Geckos, as they were only rediscovered in 1994. In captivity, they have been observed living for over 20 years.

**Conservation Status:** Crested Geckos are considered Vulnerable by the IUCN. The most pressing concerns for the species include habitat loss and introduction of invasive species.