

Ocellated Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*)

Difficulty: Easy

Ocellated skinks are 7-9" long lizards with a triangular head, cylindrical body, very smooth scales, tapered tail, and proportionally tiny limbs with slender digits. Coloring for most ocellated skinks found in the United States pet trade is typically light tan to bronze with a pattern of black and white ocelli on the back, and a pale belly.

These lizards are primarily native to the Mediterranean coast, but they can also be found in western Africa, on the borders of the Red Sea, and the Arabian peninsula near the coast. Although highly adaptable, they generally prefer arid habitats with sandy to stony soil and sparse vegetation.

Ocellated skinks are quite hardy and easy to care for in captivity, and although they aren't very handleable, their bold personalities make them a delight to watch and interact with.

Shopping List

- Exo Terra Glass Terrarium, 24"L x 18"W x 12"H (OR LARGER)
- Zoo Med T5 HO Reptisun 5.0, 12"
- Zoo Med T5 HO Reptisun Terrarium Hood, 14"
- Arcadia Jungle Dawn LED Bar, 18.5"
- Zoo Med Repti Basking Spot Bulb, 50w (2 pack)
- Fluker's Deluxe Clamp Lamp, 5.5"
- Lutron Credenza Plug-In Lamp Dimmer
- Etekcity 774 Temperature Gun
- Zoo Med Digital Combo Thermometer Humidity Gauge
- Exo Terra Mister
- Zilla 24/7 Digital Power Center
- Play sand, 50lbs
- Flat basking stone (sandstone or slate, preferably)
- Environmental enrichment
 - Ledges
 - 3D background
 - Cork logs
 - Cholla wood
 - Leaf litter
 - Artificial plants
 - Live, drought-tolerant plants
- Food and water dishes
- Calcium and multivitamin supplement
- Soft-tipped feeding tongs

Housing

One ocellated skink can be housed appropriately in an enclosure at least 30”L x 12”W x 12”H enclosure. Larger is preferable. The enclosure should be front-opening for easy access, and should have good ventilation.

Can multiple ocellated skinks be housed together?

Yes, but it’s not required for their wellbeing, and requires a larger enclosure to reduce the risk of fighting and injury. A 40 gallon (36”L x 18”W x 16”H) enclosure can house up to three adult ocellated skinks.

Lighting & UVB

Ocellated skinks are *diurnal*, which means that they are more active during the day. This also means that they are stimulated by the presence of bright white light in their environment, and they require high-intensity UVB lighting for survival.

Lights should be kept on for 12 hours/day, or cycled seasonally in increments from 14 hours/day during summer and 10 hours/day during winter.

UVB Lighting

UVB lighting can be tricky, because in order to get the right strength of UVB (UV Index, or UVI), distance and potential mesh obstruction must be considered. To provide appropriate, you will need an Arcadia T5 HO Forest 6% or Zoo Med T5 HO Reptisun 5.0 bulb, mounted in an Arcadia ProT5 or Tropic Blaze single bulb fixture on the warm side of the enclosure.

The basking platform should be placed as follows:

- UVB mounted over mesh: basking area 9-11” below UVB lamp
- UVB mounted under mesh: basking area 12-14” below UVB lamp

(These recommendations are approximations based on available data. For best results, use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 2.0-3.0 in the basking area.)

To create an appropriate gradient of temperatures and UVB, the basking platform should be the closest surface to the heat and UVB lamps in the enclosure.

Full-Spectrum Lighting

Bright light with a color temperature of 6000-7000K is suggested by experts to be important to keeping diurnal species active. Ocellated skinks with additional “daylight” lighting in their enclosure are likely to be more alert and active than those without, as well as demonstrating better appetite.

Full-spectrum lighting is not the same as reptile UVB lighting, so you will need two separate lamps. The Arcadia Jungle Dawn LED Bar or Bio Dude Glow & Grow are both excellent lamps for this purpose.

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated. Ocellated skinks, however, are *cold-blooded*, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures in order to regulate their body temperature. Ocellated skinks warm up by basking under the sun in the wild. In captivity, they do best with a halogen heat lamp or two.

- **Basking surface temperature:** 110-120°F / 43-49°C
- **Basking air temperature:** 90-100°F / 33-37°C
- **Cool side temperature:** 75-85°F / 24-29°C

Generally speaking, a ~50w PAR38 halogen flood bulb should be plenty to achieve those basking temperatures. However, if you notice that it's getting too hot, dial it down with a plug-in lamp dimmer. If your basking area is too cool, you will need a higher wattage bulb.

The basking area should ideally be a flat piece of stone such as slate, sandstone, or flagstone, and large enough to accommodate the skink's entire body.

To measure the basking surface temperature, use an infrared thermometer (a.k.a. temperature gun). To passively track basking temperature, use a digital probe thermometer, with the probe placed on the basking surface under the heat source. The [Etekcity 774](#) is a good infrared thermometer, and most reptile-brand [digital probe thermometers](#) function well enough.

Humidity

Ocellated skinks should have a daily humidity cycle of **15-35% during the day and a spike up to 90-100% in the evening**. Humidity levels should be measured by a [digital probe hygrometer](#) with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure.

To increase humidity at night, simply mist the enclosure with water and a [pressure sprayer](#) until uniformly dampened. Distilled water can be used to prevent water spots if you have hard water.

Substrate

Ocellated skinks seem to be happiest when they are housed on a loose substrate (a.k.a. "bedding") that mimics their natural habitat and allows them to burrow. So the substrate in your skink's enclosure should be fine sand or sandy soil, about 4" deep.

[Jurassic Reptile Substrate](#), [Zoo Med ReptiSand](#), [Exo Terra Desert Sand](#), and [The Bio Dude Terra Sahara](#) are all suitable ocellated skink substrate options. Play sand is also a good budget option.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 3-6 months, depending on how diligent you are about daily spot-cleaning.

Décor

Decorations play an important role in your skink's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nice! Here are some ideas:

- Cork hollows
- Cholla wood
- Sturdy branches
- Live, drought-tolerant plants
- Artificial plants
- Ledges
- 3D backgrounds

Food

Ocellated skinks are *insectivores*, which means they need to eat primarily insects to get the nutrition that their bodies need. How often they need to eat depends on age:

- **Babies — daily**
- **Juveniles and adults — 2-3x/week**
- **Pregnant and postpartum females — daily**

Offer as many insects as the skink will take consecutively in a 5-minute period. Finely chopped greens or vegetables can also be offered up to 2x/week.

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet skink is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier pet that always looks forward to mealtime.

Feeder insects: bean beetles, crickets, discoid roaches, dubia roaches, flightless fruit flies, hornworms, isopods, red runner roaches, rice flour beetles, rice worms, silkworms, mealworms, darkling beetles

Commercial diets: Arcadia InsectiGold, Repashy Grub Pie, Repashy Grasshopper Pie, Repashy Superworm Pie, Repashy Mealworm Pie, high-quality wet dog/cat food

Plants: arugula, basil, carrot greens, grated carrot root, chard, cilantro, collard greens, dandelion greens and flowers, hibiscus leaves and flowers, endive, kale, mustard greens, and parsley

Supplements

To ensure that your skink is getting all of the vitamins and minerals that it needs, you will need a calcium powder and a multivitamin powder — or a good all-in-one.

There are many options, but Arcadia Earthpro A or Repashy Calcium Plus LoD are both solid all-in-one reptile supplements. For best results, use as directed by the manufacturer.

Water

Ocellated skinks should have free access to a shallow bowl of fresh, clean water daily.

For more information about ocellated skink care, read the full-length [Ocellated Skink Care Guide](#) at ReptiFiles.com.