Phelsuma pronki

Pronk's Day Gecko

A small, rare, highland day gecko endemic to central-eastern Madagascar. Modern field surveys place it in humid evergreen forest fragments around the Andramasina/Mangabe region at roughly 800-1300 m. Wild animals are strongly associated with sun-exposed trunks and large dead trees, so successful captive care must combine bright light and localized basking with cool nights, humid refuges and excellent ventilation.

Core profile Diurnal, arboreal, shy and highly visual. Total length is only about 11-12 cm. Best suited to experienced Phelsuma keepers.	**Habitat anchor** Mangabe surveys found animals 0.5-10 m above ground, mostly 1-6 m, especially on large dead trees in open patches within humid primary forest.	**Seasonal anchor** Madagascar: warm/wet austral summer; cool/drier winter. Keeper calendar shifted six months for the Netherlands. Cool rest Nov-Feb; warm/wet peak Jun-Aug; no brumation.	**Breeding anchor** P. pronki is a free-egg layer, not an egg-gluer. Captive females can produce up to about four clutches across 3-4 months after the cool/drier rest period.

Annual keeper schedule - Northern Hemisphere (Netherlands)

Month	Day air	Night	Bask	UVI*	Light	RH day/night*	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	20-23 C	14-17 C	28-30 C	1-2	11.2 h	65-75 / 80-88%	Cool/drier; brief AM mist, good ventilation	1-2	Rest; avoid chronic warmth at night
February	21-24 C	15-18 C	29-31 C	1-2.5	11.6 h	68-78 / 82-90%	Drier but increasing; daily mist	2	Begin gradual seasonal ramp-up
March	22-25 C	16-18 C	30-32 C	1.5-2.5	12.0 h	70-80 / 84-92%	Rain slowly increases; AM + PM droplets	2-3	Condition breeders; increase prey quality
April	23-26 C	17-19 C	30-33 C	1.5-3	12.5 h	74-84 / 88-95%	Wet season starts; 2-3 mist cycles	3-4	Primary breeding trigger; watch for gravid females
May	24-27 C	18-20 C	31-34 C	1.5-3	12.9 h	76-86 / 90-95%	Heavy wet season; mist then ventilate	3-4	Courtship, mating and early laying
June	24-27 C	18-20 C	31-34 C	1.5-3	13.1 h	76-86 / 90-95%	Peak wet; frequent droplets, no stagnant air	3-4	Breeding/laying; replenish female reserves
July	24-27 C	18-20 C	31-34 C	1.5-3	13.0 h	75-85 / 90-95%	Warm/wet: 2-3 mist cycles, strong airflow	3-4	Peak warm/wet season; laying may continue
August	24-27 C	18-20 C	31-34 C	1.5-3	12.6 h	75-85 / 88-95%	Wet; heavy AM + lighter PM mist	3-4	Breeding/laying; monitor female calcium
September	23-26 C	17-19 C	30-33 C	1.5-3	12.2 h	72-82 / 86-93%	Rain easing; daily droplets remain essential	3	Late breeding; female recovery
October	22-25 C	16-18 C	29-32 C	1.5-2.5	11.7 h	68-78 / 82-90%	Transition drier; 1-2 mist cycles/day	2-3	Reduce reproductive pressure; separate if needed
November	21-24 C	15-17 C	28-31 C	1-2.5	11.3 h	65-75 / 80-88%	Cool/drier; light daily mist + drinking droplets	2	Seasonal rest begins; no brumation
December	20-23 C	14-17 C	28-30 C	1-2	11.1 h	65-75 / 80-88%	Cool/drier; brief AM mist, foliage dries by day	1-2	Deepest seasonal rest; maintain body condition

* Practical captive targets, not measured microclimate values for every locality. Provide a gradient from shade to UVI ~3 and let surfaces dry between mist cycles. Wild cold snaps can be much lower, but routine captive winter nights around 14-17 C are a safer conservative target for healthy acclimated adults.

Calendar correction: all seasonal values and management cues shifted six months; target ranges retained.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Status and legal context

The Reptile Database recognizes Phelsuma pronki Seipp, 1994 with no subspecies. The 2025-1 IUCN Red List update moved the species from Critically Endangered to Endangered. Phelsuma pronki is listed in CITES Appendix II and EU Annex B. Maintain full provenance and transfer records.

Enclosure

A proven breeder setup is around 60 x 50 x 80 cm for adults. For a pair, use at least this size with very dense structure; larger is preferable. Individual housing is safest if one animal suppresses the other. Provide front/top ventilation and escape-proof fine gaps because this species is small and fast.

Structure

Use many vertical and diagonal trunks, cork, bamboo and rough branches, including bark crevices and hollow sections. Field animals favor large dead trunks exposed to sun. Add dense foliage and multiple visual barriers so animals can bask without remaining exposed to a cage mate.

Heat

Do not run the entire enclosure hot. Warm-season ambient air around 24-27 C with a localized basking surface around 31-34 C is adequate. Winter ambient can drop toward 20-24 C with nights around 14-17 C. Several experienced keepers report that pronounced cool nights are important for long-term condition and breeding.

UVB and light

Provide very bright visible light plus high-quality linear UVB. Arrange perches so the animal can choose approximately UVI 0-3 and escape completely into shade. Replace UVB on schedule and verify output with a meter where possible.

Humidity and airflow

Aim roughly 65-85% by day depending on season, rising to 80-95% overnight. Mist to create drinking droplets, then allow bark and leaves to partially dry. Permanent saturation with stagnant air is undesirable; high humidity must be paired with strong ventilation.

Water

Most drinking occurs from droplets on leaves and glass. Mist in the morning and again later during the wet season. A small clean water cup can be offered but should not replace regular surface droplets.

Diet

Base the diet on small, well-gut-loaded insects: crickets, roach nymphs, flies, moths, firebrats and similar prey sized to the gecko. Offer only small amounts of nectar/fruit puree or a balanced day-gecko diet, typically once or twice monthly for adults rather than as the staple.

Supplementation

Dust most insect meals lightly with plain calcium and use a measured multivitamin schedule appropriate to UVB exposure. Reproductive females require excellent calcium availability, but excessive supplementation can also be harmful.

Handling and skin

Avoid routine handling. Like other day geckos, the skin is delicate and can tear or slough when grabbed. Use enclosure transfer tubes/containers and slow visual herding instead of restraint whenever possible.

Quarantine

Because this is a conservation-sensitive species, quarantine new animals individually, verify identification and paperwork, monitor weight and feces, and use reptile-veterinary diagnostics before introducing them to a breeding collection.

Breeding, eggs and juveniles

Seasonal trigger

Northern Hemisphere keeper cycle: cool/drier rest November-February; gradually increase warmth, light, misting and prey during February-March, with the main breeding trigger in April-May.
Madagascar wild surveys recorded activity and gravid females in October-November; those Southern Hemisphere dates correspond to April-May in this shifted captive schedule.

Pairing

Pairs can work, but the female must have multiple basking sites, feeding stations and visual escapes. Separate immediately if one animal persistently hides, loses weight, misses basking opportunities or shows repeated bite injuries.

Clutch rhythm

Experienced keepers report that a female may produce up to four clutches over about 3-4 months after breeding resumes. Do not try to maximize clutch count; female body condition, calcium balance and a genuine seasonal rest are more important than output.

Egg-laying mode

Important correction: P. pronki is a free-egg layer (non-gluer). Older secondary sources described glued eggs, but later reproductive observations corrected this. Supply protected bark hollows, bamboo sections and sheltered laying containers where loose eggs can be recovered without damage.

Egg handling

Remove eggs only after the shell has firmed and mark the upper surface before moving. Keep the original orientation and avoid rotation. Incubate outside the adult enclosure because adults may prey on hatchlings.

Incubation

Species-specific keeper reports give approximately 40-80 days depending on incubation temperature. A cautious starting point is about 25-27 C with a modest night drop rather than pushing temperatures high. General Phelsuma data suggest temperature can influence sex ratios, so avoid intentionally using extremes unless working from a documented breeding line.

Incubation medium

Use a small ventilated incubation cup with a humid but not wet medium such as vermiculite/perlite or suspend eggs above the substrate. Prevent condensation droplets from sitting on the shell. Check regularly for mold without excessive disturbance.

Hatchlings

Hatchlings are about 35 mm total length in experienced keeper reports. Rear individually in small, well-ventilated vertical enclosures with fine branches, foliage, gentle UVB, daily drinking droplets and micro-prey such as fruit flies, pinhead crickets and small firebrats.

Juvenile feeding

Feed juveniles small prey roughly every other day, with appropriate calcium/vitamin dusting and occasional tiny amounts of fruit/nectar food. Dehydration and competition are bigger risks than underfeeding when several juveniles are housed together.

Maturity

Growth can be rapid and sexual maturity may occur around one year, but females should preferably not be paired until approximately 18 months and robust adult condition. Early reproduction increases the risk of calcium depletion and dystocia.

Records

Record parent identity/provenance, weights, seasonal temperature minima, light hours, misting changes, introductions, observed mating, laying date, clutch size, egg mass, incubation day/night temperatures, hatch date and hatchling size. These records are especially valuable for a threatened, rarely kept species.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

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Your measuring point

Measure UVI at normal back height directly beneath the brightest accessible part of the optional T5 strip. Place the strip toward the middle/back with free access to and away from it; preserve a gradient into fully covered refuges near UVI 0. These numbers describe the exposure area, not the whole enclosure or a daily average.

Measure and adjust

1. Use a UV Index meter. A Solarmeter 6.5/6.5R or equivalent UVI meter is suitable. Broadband UVB readings in microwatts/cm2 cannot be substituted for UVI.

2. Measure the installed arrangement. Warm the tube for about 30 minutes. Keep the reflector, guards and mesh in their normal positions. With the animal elsewhere, hold the sensor at its normal back height, aimed toward the tube.

3. Adjust the fixture. Begin near the lower part of a newly selected working range and adjust gradually. Respect the lamp manufacturer's minimum distance. Recheck after each change and check every higher accessible branch, rock or platform.

4. Keep a full gradient. Provide usable exposure across the animal's body, lower-UVI areas and fully covered refuges near UVI 0. For daytime baskers, overlap the UV area with visible light and appropriate basking warmth while retaining cooler shade.

5. Record and recheck. Log UVI, measuring point, tube-to-back distance, tube age and lamp-on time. Recheck through the year and after changes to the tube, reflector, mesh or furnishings. Exposure duration and behaviour also determine dose.

A T5 range is a working exposure target, not a whole-cage setting, measured wild monthly average, guaranteed optimum or proven safety ceiling. The animal must be able to enter and leave freely.

Monthly target at normal back height

Month	UVI under T5 when on
January	1-2
February	1-2.5
March	1.5-2.5
April	1.5-3
May	1.5-3
June	1.5-3
July	1.5-3
August	1.5-3
September	1.5-3
October	1.5-2.5
November	1-2.5
December	1-2

Retain numbers; clarify measurement
The retained range remains a provisional captive working target. No new species-specific result was found that clearly requires a numerical change. Retaining it is not certification of an experimentally established optimum.

Evidence level: Provisional retention. The seasonal schedule is a captive operating plan; it is not measured wild monthly UV. Off means the existing planned UVB-off/rest phase is preserved. Any staged Off/1 entry still means gradual reintroduction.

UV references: Baines et al. (2016), UV-Tool; Muryn, Baines and Dishman (2026), Reptile Lighting Guide V10. Full rationale and monthly comparison: UVI_Audit_Report.html.