Polychrus marmoratus

Common Monkey Lizard / Many-colored Bush Anole

This protocol targets Polychrus marmoratus sensu stricto from the Guiana Shield (especially Guyana/Suriname), the lineage most often encountered in the captive trade. Modern phylogenetic work shows that many older records labelled P. marmoratus from Amazonia and Atlantic Brazil belong to a broader species complex and should not automatically be treated as the same taxon.

Core profile	Climate anchor	Breeding anchor	Incubation anchor
Diurnal, heliophilic, slow-moving and highly arboreal. Dense foliage, visual security, hydration and stable access to heat/UV are more important than high enclosure temperatures.	Equatorial Guiana Shield: little annual change in day length or temperature, but strong rainfall cycles. Natural day temperatures are around 29-32 C; captive ambient 25-29 C with a localized hot bask works well.	Breeding is strongly associated with simulated wet-season rain and increased food availability. Captive clutches commonly 6-10 eggs; successful documented clutches of 6 and 8 followed copulations by about 94-95 days.	Successful captive Guiana-line eggs have hatched at 25.5-26.6 C with modest night drops after roughly 145-160 days. Avoid assuming hotter tropical incubation is better.

Annual keeper schedule

Month	Day air	Night	Bask	UVI*	Light	RH day/night*	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	80-90 / 88-95%	Short wet peak; heavy AM/PM mist, foliage stays hydrated	3-4	Wet-season activity; breeding introductions possible
February	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	78-88 / 86-94%	Rain easing; daily drinking droplets, good airflow	3	Wet-to-short-dry transition
March	25-28 C	21-23 C	35-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	72-82 / 82-90%	Short drier phase; mist 1-2x/day, never dehydrate	2-3	Seasonal reset; maintain weight, no cooling
April	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.1 h	76-86 / 85-93%	Rain increases; longer AM/PM mist sessions	3-4	Long wet season begins; condition breeders
May	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-39 C	1.5-3	12.2 h	80-90 / 88-95%	Heavy wet season; frequent foliage droplets	3-5	Prime breeding trigger: rain + food abundance
June	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-39 C	1.5-3	12.2 h	82-92 / 90-96%	Peak rain; heavy mist with strong ventilation	3-4	Courtship/copulation; gravid females closely monitored
July	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-39 C	1.5-3	12.1 h	82-90 / 88-95%	Wet; keep several moist nesting options	2-3	Gravid period; avoid over-conditioning females
August	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	78-88 / 86-94%	Wet declining; daily mist, allow surfaces to dry	2-3	Oviposition window after spring/early-summer matings
September	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	72-82 / 82-90%	Long dry starts; lighter AM/PM mist	2-3	Late laying / female recovery; incubation ongoing
October	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	11.9 h	70-80 / 80-88%	Driest phase; daily drinking droplets remain essential	2-3	Maintenance; avoid chronic dehydration
November	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	11.9 h	72-82 / 82-90%	Dry-to-wet transition; gradually increase misting	3	Condition improves as rains return
December	26-29 C	22-24 C	36-38 C	1.5-3	12.0 h	78-88 / 86-94%	Short rains return; heavy AM/PM mist	3-4	Wet-season reset; possible secondary breeding activity

* Practical captive targets. Provide branches spanning UVI 0-3, broad-leaved drinking surfaces and shaded humid refuges. The rainfall calendar models interior Suriname/Guiana Shield seasonality; exact local rainfall varies.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Taxonomy matters

The Reptile Database now restricts P. marmoratus sensu stricto primarily to Guyana, Suriname and adjacent northern Brazil. A 2017 phylogeny showed that populations historically called “marmoratus” across Amazonia and Atlantic Brazil include separate lineages. If your animals have locality data, retain it with the breeding records.

Enclosure

This species is highly arboreal. Provide an adult pair only in a very spacious, densely planted vertical enclosure; otherwise individual housing is safest. A practical minimum is about 60 x 60 x 90 cm for an adult male and 90 x 60 x 90 cm for a female; larger is strongly preferred.

Branching and cover

Fill the enclosure with stable horizontal, diagonal and vertical branches, including fine branchwork that matches their deliberate climbing style. Dense live or artificial foliage should break lines of sight and let animals disappear from view. Avoid forcing them to remain exposed.

Heat and UVB

Captive success has been reported with ambient air around 25-29 C and a localized basking surface at or above 38 C. Maintain a broad thermal gradient. Use high-output linear UVB to create a branch-level gradient around UVI 0-3 rather than one uniformly intense zone.

Hydration and humidity

Hydration is critical. Keep general RH at least about 75% when feasible, rising overnight, but pair high humidity with airflow. Heavy morning and evening misting should leave droplets on broad leaves for drinking. Do not rely on a standing water bowl as the main drinking source.

Seasonal rain

Temperature and photoperiod change little near the equator. Reproduce seasonality mainly through rainfall: short wet around Dec-Jan, short drier period around Feb-Mar, long wet Apr-Aug, and long drier phase around Sep-Nov. Never turn the dry phase into dehydration.

Diet

Use varied gut-loaded arthropods: crickets, roaches, grasshoppers, phasmids, caterpillars, flies and similar prey. Small amounts of berries and soft fruit can be offered; captive Guiana-line animals often accept fruit readily. Avoid an insect-only monoculture.

Feeding rhythm

Adults have relatively slow metabolisms. Maintenance feeding around 2-3 times weekly is generally adequate, increasing during wet-season conditioning. Gravid females should not be pushed excessively; over-conditioning may increase reproductive problems.

Calcium and female risk

Reproductively active females appear vulnerable to hypocalcemia and dystocia. Maintain strong UVB, balanced calcium supplementation and normal body condition. Any persistent restlessness, digging without laying, weakness or retained eggs requires prompt reptile-veterinary assessment.

Quarantine

Wild-caught imports often arrive dehydrated and stressed. Prioritize hydration, security and nutrition before aggressive treatment. Keep new animals individually in strict quarantine and use veterinary diagnostics rather than routine heavy empiric parasite treatment.

Breeding, nesting and incubation

Breeding trigger

The best documented captive breeding occurred when keepers simulated the wet season with substantially increased misting and food availability. This supports rainfall/resource abundance as a major cue rather than a cool winter period.

Pairing

Introduce well-conditioned animals only when the female can escape the male visually and physically. Copulation is arboreal and may last 1-3 hours. Persistent male pressure can cause females to abandon preferred basking and feeding positions, so separation capability is essential.

Gestation

In two successful captive Guiana-line breedings, females laid 94 and 95 days after observed copulation. Another female began laying after about 120 days. Appetite commonly drops in the final weeks and restless positioning/test digging may appear.

Nest design

Offer several nest choices before the female becomes restless. Successful females selected shallow, root-filled elevated planters with surface temperatures around 26.5 C. Provide at least 20-25 cm of moist but aerated soil/peat/sand/leaf-litter mix, with both ground-level and elevated options across a thermal gradient.

Clutch size

Six to ten eggs is a useful expectation; larger females may produce more. Documented captive clutches included 6, 8 and 12 eggs. The 12-egg female suffered severe retention/dystocia, reinforcing the need to avoid over-conditioning and to provide nest options early.

Incubation - best captive evidence

One clutch incubated at about 25.5 C with a small night drop hatched at 160 days, though some fully formed neonates failed to emerge. Two later clutches incubated around 26.6 C with a night drop to about 25.8 C hatched successfully at 145 and 158 days.

Practical incubation

A conservative starting point is 26-27 C by day with a modest night drop, high but not saturated humidity, and eggs supported so condensation/free water does not pool against the shell. Do not rotate eggs after incubation begins. Expect roughly 145-160 days, while recognizing that lineage and temperature can alter duration.

Taxonomic caution on older egg data

A 2022 Atlantic Forest report described eight hatchlings after 241 days at 28 C, but modern phylogenetic work indicates southeastern Brazilian “P. marmoratus” are not necessarily P. marmoratus sensu stricto. Treat that datum as relevant to the broader complex, not as the primary incubation target for Guiana-line animals.

Neonates

Raise neonates in densely planted arboreal setups with the same thermal/UV principles as adults, excellent hydration and smaller prey. Feed juveniles about 4-5 times per week. Individual housing makes it easier to detect subtle suppression or feeding inequality.

Record keeping

Record locality/provenance, body weights, rainfall/misting changes, pair introductions, copulation dates, appetite changes, laying date, clutch size, egg mass, nest temperature, incubation temperature/night drop, pipping and hatchling size. These records are particularly valuable in a species complex.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Polychrus marmoratus

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	1.5-3
February	1.5-3
March	1.5-3
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	1.5-3
November	1.5-3
December	1.5-3

Align webpage with current PDF
The latest saved PDF uses UVI 1.5-3 throughout, while the webpage retained 2-3. Use the current PDF range on both, as an optional canopy exposure patch with dense cover. This resolves a version mismatch; it does not establish a new physiological minimum or optimum.

Evidence level: Version consistency correction. 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.