Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Polychrus peruvianus - Peruvian bush anole

Identity and habitat

A highly arboreal, chameleon-like lizard of northern Peru and extreme southern Ecuador. It is most characteristic of inter-Andean seasonally dry forest, but also occurs near streams and in more humid forest. Wild animals are typically found 1.5-7 m above ground on trees and shrubs.

Field temperature and RH

Direct field measurements recorded active animals at 28.7-35.9 C and 41-63% RH by day. Sleeping animals were recorded at 20.8-28.3 C and 53-75% RH at night. These are ambient field observations, not targets for heating the entire enclosure.

Diet and reproduction

A 2019 diet study found adults to be semi-herbivorous generalists: plant material dominated adult food volume, while juveniles relied much more strongly on animal prey. The species is oviparous; secondary accounts report roughly 4-8 eggs, but detailed wild reproductive timing remains poorly documented.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTO	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	STATUS / BREEDING
January	23-27 C	17-20 C	32-34 C	2-3	10 h 30 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	3	Dry/cool period
February	23-27 C	17-20 C	32-34 C	2-3	10 h 45 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	3	Dry/cool period
March	24-28 C	18-21 C	33-35 C	2-3	11 h 15 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 2x/wk	3-4	Warm-up / conditioning
April	25-29 C	19-22 C	34-35 C	3	12 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 2x/wk	3-4	Pre-rain conditioning
May	26-30 C	20-23 C	34-36 C	3	12 h 45 m	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 rain/mist events/wk	4	Rain ramp-up
June	27-31 C	21-24 C	34-36 C	3	13 h 15 m	55-70 / 70-85%	4 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Wet season begins
July	27-31 C	21-24 C	34-36 C	3	13 h 30 m	60-75 / 75-88%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Peak wet season
August	27-31 C	21-24 C	34-36 C	3	13 h	60-75 / 75-88%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Wet season / conditioning
September	26-30 C	20-23 C	34-35 C	2-3	12 h 15 m	55-70 / 70-85%	3-4 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Color/display / courtship
October	25-29 C	19-22 C	33-35 C	2-3	11 h 30 m	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 rain/mist events/wk	4	Working mating window
November	24-28 C	18-21 C	33-34 C	2-3	10 h 45 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	3-4	Possible gravid / nesting
December	23-27 C	17-20 C	32-34 C	2	10 h 30 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	3	Dry-down / possible laying

Climate translation: the Marañon dry forest receives most rain during the southern summer, roughly December-March. This keeper schedule shifts that rain pulse by about six months to June-September for Northern Hemisphere management.

* RH, UVI and spray values are captive working targets. The wild species spans both very dry and stream-side microhabitats, so provide a humidity gradient rather than one fixed enclosure RH.

Breeding note: the September-November courtship/mating window is an evidence-informed captive working schedule following the rain pulse; exact species-specific wild breeding dates remain low-confidence.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Arboreal dry-forest husbandry: tall structure, moderate heat, strong foliage cover, seasonal rain and a mixed plant/invertebrate diet.

Enclosure and structure

This species is strongly arboreal and should be housed vertically. For one adult, about 100 x 60 x 120 cm or larger is a practical starting point; a breeding pair benefits from 120 x 70 x 150 cm or more. Fill the enclosure with fine and medium branches, live or artificial foliage, horizontal sleeping twigs and visual barriers.

Heat, gradient and UVB

Use moderate general air temperatures with a local basking branch around 32-36 C. Keep shaded foliage and lower retreats in the low-to-mid 20s C so animals can escape heat. A measured UVI around 2-3 at the preferred basking branch is a reasonable working target, with dense shade below UVI 1.

RH, rain and ventilation

Maintain moderate RH in the long dry phase and increase both rain frequency and nighttime RH from June-September. Provide short, thorough rain/mist events rather than permanently wet surfaces. Foliage and branches should partly dry between events. Cross-ventilation is essential to prevent stagnant humid air.

Hydration and drinking

Polychrus often drink from leaves and branches rather than readily using a bowl. During the wet phase, rain sessions should create visible droplets on foliage. Keep a clean water source available, but do not assume a bowl alone provides adequate hydration.

Adult diet

Adults should receive a genuinely mixed diet, not insects alone. The 2019 field study found plant material formed about three quarters of total food volume, and adult stomachs were especially plant-rich. Offer edible leaves, flowers, tender shoots and suitable fruit together with varied gut-loaded insects.

Juvenile diet

Juveniles are substantially more animal-prey oriented. In the diet study, juvenile stomach contents were dominated by faunistic prey by volume. Offer small gut-loaded insects frequently while presenting soft leaves and flowers from the beginning, then increase the plant fraction gradually with growth.

Social management

Animals can sleep in the same tree in the wild, but males can be territorial. Individual housing is safest outside breeding. For introductions, use a densely structured enclosure with multiple canopy routes and feeding sites. Separate immediately for persistent chasing, biting, color suppression, food exclusion or weight loss.

Daily keeper checks

Check eyes/nose, grip, tail use, posture, appetite, feces, hydration and body mass. Observe color and pattern changes because they can reflect social or reproductive state. Confirm that sleeping perches remain dry enough to prevent skin problems while humid foliage refuges are still available.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Rainfall appears to be an important reproductive cue; clutch size is known only imperfectly and incubation parameters remain under-documented.

Breeding trigger

Published species-specific breeding records are sparse, but captive observations report that reproduction improved after animals received both plant foods and regular rainfall. The schedule therefore uses a strong June-September wet phase followed by September-November display and breeding activity.

Clutch size and nesting

Modern secondary species accounts report roughly 4-8 eggs per clutch, deposited in sandy substrate or leaf litter. Because primary wild clutch data remain limited, treat this as a working range rather than a fixed expectation. Provide a secluded ground-level nesting pocket despite the species' otherwise arboreal lifestyle.

Nest provision

From September onward, offer at least 20-30 cm of loose soil/sand/leaf-litter mix in a secluded planted corner. Keep the lower zone lightly moist while the surface remains relatively dry. A female should be able to descend, excavate and leave the site without crossing an exposed open floor.

Incubation caution

Reliable species-specific incubation temperature and duration were not located. If eggs are produced, document laying date, dimensions and mass. Use conservative moderate iguanian incubation temperatures with a moisture gradient rather than high constant heat, and refine from your own successful clutch data.

Evidence confidence

Taxonomy / range - High
Northern Peru and southern Ecuador; current Reptile Database treatment.

Arboreal habitat - High
47-animal field series: almost exclusively trees/shrubs, 1.5-7 m high.

Field temperature / RH - High
Direct measurements published for day and night observations.

Diet - High
2019 stomach-content study: adult plant dominance, juveniles more faunivorous.

Rain season - High
Marañon dry forest receives most rain in southern summer; keeper calendar is shifted six months.

Clutch size - Moderate-low
Secondary species accounts report 4-8 eggs; primary clutch data are sparse.

Breeding timing - Low-moderate
Captive working translation after wet-season cue; exact wild dates not established.

Incubation - Low
Robust species-specific incubation parameters were not located.

Key references

1. Koch et al. (2011), ZooKeys 141: redescription and natural history; arboreality, daytime 28.7-35.9 C / 41-63% RH and nighttime 20.8-28.3 C / 53-75% RH. 2. Beuttner & Koch (2019), Amphibian & Reptile Conservation 13: diet; plant material dominates adult food volume, juveniles are more faunivorous. 3. Reptile Database: accepted taxonomy, distribution and oviparity. 4. Reptiles of Ecuador: secondary summary of 4-8 eggs and nesting in sandy substrate/leaf litter. 5. Marañon dry-forest climate literature: rainfall concentrated in southern-summer months.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Polychrus peruvianus

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	2-3
February	2-3
March	2-3
April	3
May	3
June	3
July	3
August	3
September	2-3
October	2-3
November	2-3
December	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.