

## **Reptilia Classroom Habitarium Program**

There is no better way to motivate students to learn about animals than to provide them with opportunities to handle animals in the classroom. The Leopard Gecko classroom habitarium program taps into the children's natural curiosity about observing the changes that take place in animals and offers them a unique way of addressing the Science and Technology expectations for the Life Systems strand in Grade Two. The classroom habitarium program is designed to teach students about reptiles, their natural history, and care in captivity. Students will also learn about proper diet and hygiene, as they care for the animals.

Leopard Geckos have been selected based on ease of care, temperament, and adult size and growth rate. The leopard gecko can reproduce within the school year, giving the students the chance to incubate eggs and hatch young.

In order to observe the full range of growth and development, the geckos are delivered in September of the school year and remain in the classroom until June of the following year. As such, we have outlined a range of activities for addressing the Life Systems strand throughout the year. In this way, teachers can refer to the geckos on an ongoing basis and meaningfully incorporate observation of the geckos throughout the year. In this unit, the activities have been arranged by month, in a manner that best incorporates changes taking place with the geckos. In this way, the Life Systems strand will be revisited throughout the year, but the activities should not take any more time than would otherwise have been the case.

### **Note to the Teacher**

Obviously, where and when possible, consider including as many references to the geckos as you realistically can throughout the body of the activities. In this way, the Habitarium experience can be more smoothly integrated into the entire Life Systems strand which is ongoing throughout the year.

**Items Necessary for Habitarium Set-Up**

- ❖ 2 Leopard Geckos - one male and one female
- ❖ 15 Gallon terrarium
- ❖ Habitarium decorations (sand, cork bark, and moss)
- ❖ Secure screen lid
- ❖ 50-60 Watt infrared heat lamp
- ❖ Dome reflector - for the heat lamp
- ❖ Water bowl
- ❖ Herpcare Cricket Dust (for coating the crickets)
- ❖ Supply of food
- ❖ Leopard Gecko nest box
- ❖ Incubator for developing eggs
- ❖ Submersible aquarium heater to heat incubator
- ❖ Vermiculite
- ❖ Digital thermometer with temperature probe
- ❖ Incubation Tray

**Safety Issue!**

The heat lamp can become very hot and can burn little fingers and tables. Care should be taken when placing it on any surface, since it could result in damage/fire. Also, the staff at Reptilia has assured us that all of the vitamin supplements that they provide are "peanut-free" and will not be a problem for students with such allergies.

**Gecko Care**

Learning to care for the Leopard Geckos is a vital part of the learning experience for the students. Participating teachers will receive a brief in-service on the proper care and handling of the animals by the Reptilia staff ([www.reptilia.org](http://www.reptilia.org) or phone 905 761-6223).

- ❖ Please remember that it will be necessary to arrange for suitable care for the geckos during the Christmas holiday and other times of extended absence from school.
- ❖ Consider having a duty roster so that all students experience the responsibility of caring for the animal. Consider having antibacterial soap or latex gloves available to increase student comfort with handling the animals.
- ❖ Increase the students' opportunities to observe the geckos by arranging feeding times to coincide with observational times.
- ❖ Set guidelines for visiting the animal centre, such as how many students can be there at one time and for how long. Students should not be allowed to pick up the geckos without some form of supervision. Leave a class journal by the terrarium and encourage students to jot down observations during free time.
- ❖ Post the Leopard Gecko Quick Fact Sheet at the animal centre for quick and easy reference.

Invite visitors from other classes to view the geckos. Use this opportunity to let your students highlight their expertise. However, ensure that students in other classrooms know that the geckos are not to be handled unless visiting arrangements have been made.