

Brachylophus bulabula

Central Fijian Banded Iguana - Fiji

This protocol is for Brachylophus bulabula, the central Fijian banded iguana. The species was separated from the traditional broad concept of B. fasciatus in 2008. True B. fasciatus is the Lau/Moala form, while B. bulabula represents the familiar central-island banded iguana. Older zoo breeding records labelled "B. fasciatus" may therefore include B. bulabula and must be interpreted with provenance in mind.

Taxonomic anchor Recognized full species. Central Fiji banded iguana; true Lau banded iguanas are B. fasciatus and Gau Island animals are B. gau.	Habitat Arboreal forest iguana. Wild animals use trees and dense canopy structure; females descend to soil deposits or the forest floor to nest.	Climate anchor Fiji wild cycle: warm/wet Nov-Apr; cooler/drier May-Oct. Northern keeper cycle: warm/wet May-Oct; cool Nov-Apr. Shifted six months; retain humidity and water year-round.	Incubation anchor A documented pair laid 3 eggs on 5 Jul; 2 fertile eggs incubated at constant 27 C and both hatched 12 Jan - about 191 days.
---	--	--	---

Annual keeper schedule - Northern Hemisphere (Netherlands)

Month	Day air	Night	Bask	UVI*	Light	RH day/night*	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	26-28 C	20-22 C	34-38 C	3-5	11.0 h	66-79 / 78-89%	Dry-season phase; keep humid refuges and leaf water	6-7	Maintenance; captive laying can occur out of season
February	26-28 C	20-22 C	34-38 C	3-5	11.3 h	66-80 / 78-90%	Relatively dry; good ventilation and regular misting	6-7	Conditioning; rebuild reserves
March	27-29 C	21-23 C	35-38 C	3-5	11.7 h	68-81 / 80-91%	Rain begins increasing gradually	7	Reproductive conditioning; increase browse variety
April	27-30 C	22-24 C	35-39 C	3-5	12.1 h	70-83 / 82-92%	Warm/wet transition; daily rain/mist	7	Pre-breeding; monitor male display and female mass
May	28-30 C	23-24 C	36-39 C	3-5	12.5 h	72-85 / 84-94%	Wet season begins; frequent showers	7	Courtship commonly expected; close pair supervision
June	28-31 C	23-25 C	36-40 C	3-5	12.8 h	73-86 / 85-95%	Warm/wet; frequent rain with drying intervals	7	Courtship/mating; nest area prepared early
July	28-31 C	23-25 C	36-40 C	3-5	12.7 h	72-85 / 84-94%	Warm/wet; frequent showers, strong airflow	7	Courtship/mating; abundant browse and hydration
August	28-31 C	23-25 C	36-40 C	3-5	12.4 h	73-86 / 85-94%	Wet season; daily leaf wetting with drying intervals	7	Mating / early gravidity; nest zone available
September	28-30 C	23-24 C	36-39 C	3-5	12.1 h	72-85 / 84-93%	Wet; frequent rain pulses, never stagnant	7	Gravidity / nesting possible; watch female condition
October	27-30 C	22-24 C	35-39 C	3-5	11.7 h	70-83 / 82-92%	Wet season easing; daily drinking droplets	7	Late nesting possible / female recovery
November	27-29 C	21-23 C	35-38 C	3-5	11.4 h	68-81 / 80-90%	Cool/dry transition; mist most evenings	6-7	Recovery and maintenance; no brumation
December	26-28 C	20-22 C	34-38 C	3-5	11.1 h	66-79 / 78-89%	Cooler/drier; light daily or alternate-day mist	6-7	Cool-season maintenance; maintain body condition

* Captive working targets, not direct measurements of every wild canopy microclimate. Provide a strong gradient: exposed warm basking branches, cooler foliage, deep shade and continuous air exchange. There is no brumation; seasonality is mainly rainfall, photoperiod and a modest night-temperature shift.

Calendar correction: monthly climate and management cues shifted six months; target ranges retained. Published case dates stay unchanged.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Taxonomy / provenance

Keep provenance records with every animal. *B. bulabula* was described in 2008 from central Fijian banded iguanas previously included within *B. fasciatus*. Do not mix *Brachylophus* species or uncertain historical lines in conservation-minded breeding. Current taxonomy also recognizes *B. gau* separately from Gau Island.

Enclosure

Highly arboreal. Prioritize height, usable branch volume and foliage over open floor area. Adults need several horizontal and diagonal branches thick enough to support the whole body, elevated refuges, visual barriers and multiple basking/sleeping positions. Dense cover helps reduce stress and lets animals escape visual contact.

Temperature

Published successful captive housing used a basking area fluctuating about 38-41 C, a cool end near 24 C by day and 21 C at night. For routine management, use a broad daytime ambient gradient around 26-31 C, keep most of the enclosure cooler than the basking branch, and allow winter nights around 20-22 C.

UVB and visible light

Use bright full-spectrum lighting with linear UVB. A practical basking-zone target is approximately UVI 3-5 with immediate access to dense shade and UVI near zero. Position UVB so the animal can choose exposure; do not force the entire canopy into one high-UV zone.

Humidity and airflow

Central Fiji is humid, especially in the warm/wet season. Maintain roughly 65-85% daytime RH with higher night peaks, but pair humidity with excellent ventilation. Mist leaves so animals can drink droplets, then permit partial surface drying. Constant stagnant wetness is not a substitute for tropical humidity.

Seasonality

Northern Hemisphere keeper cycle for the Netherlands: warm/wet May-October and cooler/drier November-April, shifted six months from Fiji's warm/wet November-April and cooler/drier May-October sequence. Central windward localities can remain rainy year-round. Reduce misting modestly in the cooler period; retain humid refuges and drinking access rather than making the enclosure arid.

Diet

Adults are primarily herbivorous. Make leafy browse the foundation: hibiscus, mulberry, grape leaves, dandelion, endive/escarole, sow-thistle and safe edible flowers where available. Add squash, green beans and other high-fibre vegetables. Fruit should be a minority rather than the bulk of the diet.

Animal protein

Some captive reports have offered insects, but adult *Brachylophus* husbandry should remain plant-dominant. Routine high-protein feeding is unnecessary. If animal prey is ever used for enrichment, keep it rare and avoid allowing it to displace leafy browse.

Calcium / supplements

Provide calcium-rich plant choices and measured UVB. Use plain calcium lightly on lower-calcium feeds and a conservative reptile multivitamin schedule rather than heavy daily supplementation. Monitor body condition, jaw firmness, limb strength and shell-free fecal urates as practical health indicators.

Water

Provide a clean water bowl even if rarely used, and offer drinking droplets on foliage by misting. During the wet/reproductive season, hydration demand rises; gravid females should never be allowed to dehydrate.

Social management

Pair housing can work but requires close observation. Males may become intensely colored and persistent during breeding attempts. Separate immediately if the female cannot rest, stops feeding, loses weight, sustains bite wounds or is repeatedly displaced from basking/feeding sites.

Biosecurity

Brachylophus are high-conservation-value animals. Quarantine new arrivals, screen feces, use dedicated tools, disinfect between enclosures and prevent cross-contact between species or uncertain lineages. Maintain permanent identity and parentage records.

Breeding, nesting, incubation and juveniles

Reproductive season

Species-specific wild timing is poorly documented. Use the wet-season rise as a cue, shifted to Northern Hemisphere spring/summer here. The commonly quoted Southern Hemisphere Jan-Mar laying window translates to Jul-Sep. This is not a rigid bulabula laying rule: a documented pair on 12-hour year-round light laid three eggs on 5 July. That is an actual published case date, retained unchanged rather than shifted into the keeper calendar.

Breeding trigger

Do not brumate. From the cooler/drier November-April period, gradually increase nighttime warmth, rainfall/misting and food abundance during March-April into the May-October warm/wet season. These dates follow the Northern Hemisphere keeper calendar. Maintain stable body condition and hydration; avoid dramatic temperature manipulation.

Nest preparation

Provide a deep nest zone before any obvious gravidity. In the documented 2016 case, eggs were deposited in a 41 x 35 x 25 cm container filled with damp vermiculite. In larger naturalistic enclosures, offer at least 25-35 cm of stable, diggable soil/sand/organic substrate with enough moisture to hold a tunnel.

Clutch size

Captive reports commonly describe about 3-6 eggs, although records vary. The published 2016 clutch contained three eggs, of which two were normal and fertile. Zoo information also commonly cites around five eggs. Track each female individually rather than assuming a fixed clutch size.

Female health

Watch for restlessness, repeated digging, reduced appetite and abdominal enlargement. Brachylophus can suffer reproductive problems such as follicular stasis, ovostasis and yolk coelomitis. Failure to lay after persistent digging or a sudden decline in condition warrants prompt reptile-veterinary assessment.

Egg handling

Allow the female to finish laying and back-filling. Mark the upper surface before moving eggs and preserve orientation. Handle minimally. Place eggs in a stable incubation container with clean vermiculite or perlite and enough ventilation to prevent stagnant condensation.

Best documented incubation

The strongest species-specific case incubated two fertile eggs at a constant 27 C. Both were laid 5 July 2016 and hatched 12 January 2017, approximately 191 days later. This is a better evidence anchor than trying to shorten incubation with high temperatures.

Moisture caution

In that case the initially damp vermiculite dried until it was dry to the touch after about two months, yet both eggs remained healthy. The authors explicitly stated that it was unknown whether this drying was beneficial or merely tolerated. Therefore do NOT deliberately desiccate eggs; instead maintain a conservative moist-not-wet medium and monitor egg mass/appearance.

Practical incubation range

A sensible starting range is about 27-28 C, expecting a long incubation - often roughly 5-7 months. Avoid pushing temperatures to 30-31 C simply to accelerate development unless you have lineage-specific successful records. Record all temperatures and moisture changes.

Hatching

Prepare to separate hatchlings promptly. In the published case the two young hatched within about an hour of each other and immediately chased and bit one another. Allow yolk/umbilical tissue to stabilize, then house juveniles individually or with extremely close observation.

Juvenile care

Use a secure arboreal setup with fine branches and dense foliage. Keep roughly 26-29 C by day, 21-24 C at night, with a 32-35 C basking option, moderate UVB and frequent drinking droplets. Offer finely cut tender greens, edible flowers and small amounts of fruit daily.

Record keeping

Record lineage/provenance, courtship and copulation, female weights, digging onset, lay date, clutch size, individual egg weights, incubation temperature, medium and moisture changes, hatch date, hatchling mass/length and early behavior. These data are especially valuable because reliable species-specific breeding literature remains limited.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Brachylophus bulabula

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	3-5
February	3-5
March	3-5
April	3-5
May	3-5
June	3-5
July	3-5
August	3-5
September	3-5
October	3-5
November	3-5
December	3-5

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](#).