

# All About Geckos

We can't really tell you all about geckos because there are over 1,000 different kinds! These different "kinds" are called species, and people who study reptiles (herpetologists) have divided these species into 2 main groups (based on their *eyes*, of all things):

- Group 1 has fixed eyelids (they cannot blink, just like snakes.)
- Group 2 has movable eyelids (they can blink, just like people.)

Geckos have very sharp eyesight, and their eyes tell us a lot about them. For example:

- If a gecko has round pupils (like human eyes), it means that the gecko is diurnal (most active during the day.)
- If the gecko has vertical pupils (that go up and down like a cat's), it means that the gecko is nocturnal (most active at night.)

## Where Do Geckos Live?

Geckos are found mostly in deserts, tropical, and sub-tropical areas. What this means is that geckos like it hot! People that have geckos as pets have to set up a vivarium (an indoor enclosure that's similar to an animal's natural habitat). They use heating mats and lamps inside the vivarium so that the temperature ranges between 76 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. That's hot!

## How DO Geckos Stick to the Ceiling?

When Nolan tells his mom that it's geometry (and hairy feet) that keeps Sticky from falling off the ceiling, he's not kidding. Geckos have millions of tiny hairs on their feet. These hairs are called setae (pronounced *see-tee*) and each hair splits into even tinier branches. Each hairy foot of a gecko has up to a billion split-ends! The cool thing about these split-ends is that they don't have glue or gunk or anything sticky on them. It's the angle the toe hairs make with the window or wall or ceiling that creates friction and allows the gecko to "stick".

## What Do Geckos Eat?

If cows are herbivores (they eat plants) and cats are carnivores (they eat meat) and people are omnivores (they eat both plants and meat) then what's a gecko?

An insectivore. (Really!) Geckos eat mostly insects (which makes them a special kind of carnivore.) Geckos love crickets and grasshoppers and earthworms and mealworms—insects and worms! (There's no such thing as a wormivore, sorry.)

## Fascinating Facts

- Geckos range in size from about 1 inch long to over 1 foot long!
- If you hold a light up to one ear of some geckos, the light will shine clear through the head and out the other ear!
- Geckos can see better than any other lizard.
- Gecko tails are mostly fat. This is where geckos store energy for times when food is scarce.

