What is National Reptile Keeping day?

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The Pragmatic Aquarist

By Richard Cook, Managing Director, Shirley Aquatics

What Is National Reptile Keeping Day?

What is National Reptile Keeping Day? It's an annual day, held every year on 7 November, that celebrates doing reptile keeping properly. The very first one, in 2026, is being hosted here at Shirley Aquatics. You don't need anyone's permission to take part, and you don't need to be in Wythall either.



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Why Reptile Keeping Deserves a Day of Its Own

Keeping a reptile well is a skill, and like most skills it's mostly invisible when it's done right. You don't notice a correctly placed UVB tube, a sensible temperature gradient or a properly balanced diet. You just see a healthy, alert animal getting on with its life.

You do notice when it's done badly, though, and so does the animal. That's really the point of the day. It shines a light on the knowledge, care and patience that good keeping takes, so more people understand what's involved before they start, not after.

I've spent over 35 years in this trade, and I'll say it plainly: the biggest problems I see rarely come from bad people. They come from good people who didn't know what they didn't know. A day like this helps close that gap.

What Good Reptile Keeping Actually Involves

There's no "fill the bowl and walk away" option with reptiles. Every species has its own requirements for heat, light, humidity, space and diet, and those requirements come from where the animal lives in the wild. A desert lizard and a rainforest frog may share a shop aisle, but they don't share much else.

And yes, that frog isn't a reptile. Neither is a tarantula, a scorpion or a giant African land snail, but you'll find all of them in pretty much every reptile department in the country, ours included. So National Reptile Keeping Day covers the lot. If it lives in a vivarium and relies on you to get its environment right, it counts.

Good keeping also means captive breeding, which takes pressure off wild populations, and in some cases helps maintain species that are struggling in their natural habitats. A surprising amount of genuine conservation work goes on in spare bedrooms up and down the country.

Like many hobbies people are passionate about, reptile keeping is full of advice, and some of it contradicts itself. That can make it hard to get a definitive answer when all you want to know is what's right for the animal. Part of the point of the day is to help with exactly that: clear, sensible information, shared generously, with the animal at the centre of it.

Who's Behind It

National Reptile Keeping Day is fully supported by some of the biggest names in reptile equipment, including Exo Terra, Repto, ProRep, Galapagos and Arcadia. When companies that normally compete for the same shelf space all agree on something, it's usually worth paying attention.

Shirley Aquatics has been trading since 1939, and our reptile department has watched the standard of keeping improve enormously over the years. We'd like to see that recognised, and we'd like to see it keep improving.



Why 7 November, and Not May?

If you've been following this, you might remember we originally planned the day for 24 May. Honest truth: we bit off more than we could chew.

Summer me had big plans. We needed a marquee. We needed to level the ground for the marquee to stand on. We needed every supplier on site and multiple talks every day. Then summer happened, as it does in a business like ours, and it simply didn't come together.

Looking back, it's the best thing that could have happened. Since then we've joined Responsible Reptile Keeping, and I've realised the day was never really about an event. It's about responsible keeping, and that's something anyone can take part in, wherever they are. Rome wasn't built in a day. Apparently national days aren't either.

Raising Money for the Right Reasons

Every National Reptile Keeping Day, we'll be fundraising for Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA.

The logic is simple. Good keeping comes from education and decent information, which is exactly what Responsible Reptile Keeping exists to promote. And when things go wrong, it's organisations like the RSPCA who pick up the pieces. Supporting both ends of that feels like the sensible thing to do.

Come and See Us

Shirley Aquatics is proud to host the very first National Reptile Keeping Day in 2026, and we'll be marking it every 7 November from now on. Details of what's happening each year will be shared here as they're confirmed.

Whenever you visit, come and meet the team, ask as many questions as you like and see what good reptile keeping looks like up close. You'll find us at Beckett's Farm, Alcester Road, Wythall, B47 6AJ. Easy to reach from Birmingham, Solihull, Redditch and Bromsgrove, and the kettle will be on.

How You Can Mark the Day

Not everyone can make it to Wythall, and that's fine. You can still play your part wherever you are, and none of it needs to be elaborate.

Pay a visit to your local reptile shop and ask a few questions. Any decent shop will be delighted to talk to you, and if they aren't, that tells you something useful too. Ask about lighting, ask about diet, ask what the animal will need in five years, not just this week.

If you're thinking about getting a reptile, learn as much as you can about the species before you buy. How big it gets, how long it lives, what it eats and what it costs to run properly. Some reptiles live for decades, so it's worth knowing what you're signing up for.

The best time to research an animal is before it's sat in a box on your passenger seat.

If you already keep reptiles, take a fresh look at your setup. When did you last replace your UVB tube? Is your thermostat still reading accurately? Every keeper, however experienced, has something they could do a little better. I know I have.

Support organisations like Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA, whether that's through a donation, sharing their advice or simply pointing new keepers in their direction.

And finally, share what you're doing using #nationalreptilekeepingday.

If you're wondering why any of this matters, have a read of Why Does the UK Need a National Reptile Keeping Day?

The Prize Draw

There's also a prize draw running alongside the campaign, with £500 worth of reptile equipment up for grabs. Based on everything I know about our customers, most of you will have spent it in your heads before the end of this sentence.

The Pragmatic Summary: What Is National Reptile Keeping Day?

- National Reptile Keeping Day is held every year on 7 November
- The first one, in 2026, is hosted at Shirley Aquatics in Wythall
- It celebrates doing reptile keeping properly, through knowledge, care and good practice
- It covers everything you'd find in a reptile department, including amphibians, spiders and invertebrates, not just reptiles

- It's backed by Exo Terra, Repto, ProRep, Galapagos and Arcadia
- We fundraise for Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA
- Can't get to us? Visit your local reptile shop, research before you buy, and review your own setup
- Share what you're doing with #nationalreptilekeepingday

No pressure, of course. But if you've ever lost a Sunday afternoon to rearranging a vivarium, you already know why this matters.

About the author

Richard Cook is the Managing Director of Shirley Aquatics, a family-run aquatics business that has been serving fishkeepers since 1939. A third-generation aquatic retailer with over 35 years of hands-on experience, Richard is the voice behind The Pragmatic Aquarist, known for his honest, no-nonsense approach to fishkeeping advice that helps customers make confident decisions that work in the real world, not just on paper.