Why the UK needs a national reptile keeping day

Reptiles · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/why-the-uk-needs-a-national-reptile-keeping-day/

The Pragmatic Aquarist

By Richard Cook, Managing Director, Shirley Aquatics

Why Does the UK Need a National Reptile Keeping Day?

The UK needs a National Reptile Keeping Day because, like many hobbies people are passionate about, reptile keeping is full of advice, and that advice sometimes ends up contradicting itself. It can be hard to get a straight answer when all you want to know is what's right for the animal. A day that celebrates doing it properly would help keepers and would-be keepers, and most importantly, the animals. Also, frankly, everyone else has got one.



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Everyone Else Has a Day

There are days for dogs. There are days for cats. I'm fairly confident there are at least six separate days dedicated to coffee. Meanwhile, reptile keepers are standing quietly in the corner saying "my gecko has finally learned to trust me", while everyone else is distracted by a golden retriever in sunglasses.

It Would Help People Understand What They're Taking On

This is the serious bit, and it's the main reason we're backing the day.

Reptiles are wonderful animals, but you can't look after them by guessing and hoping. They need the right heat, light, humidity, diet and space, and they need it every day. Somewhere, right now, someone is looking at an iguana and wondering whether it can eat a crisp sandwich.

It can't. Your iguana has standards.

A lot of reptiles are bought on impulse because they're small, striking and look easy. Then the new owner discovers the tiny tortoise will live for decades, needs specialist care and may well end up inheriting the house. A day focused on responsible keeping encourages people to research before they buy, not after, which is better for everyone, the animal most of all.

It Would Help Cut Through the Contradictory Advice

Ask ten keepers how warm a corn snake's enclosure should be and you might well get ten answers. Most of them will be close, some will be based on experience, and a few will be based on something someone read on a forum in 2009. Everyone means well, which is exactly what makes it so confusing for someone just starting out.

A day focused on responsible keeping puts the emphasis back where it belongs: on what the animal actually needs. Good shops, good organisations and experienced keepers sharing sensible, consistent advice, so new keepers can make confident decisions instead of drowning in opinions.

If you're ever unsure, ask. A decent reptile shop would always rather answer a question than sell you something you didn't need.

It's Not Just About Reptiles

Walk into any reptile department in the country, ours included, and you'll find frogs, tarantulas, scorpions and giant African land snails alongside the lizards and snakes. None of them are reptiles, and all of them rely on their keeper getting the environment right. National Reptile Keeping Day covers the lot.

It Would Give Keepers Some Credit

Reptile keepers put in an enormous amount of effort. Hours spent researching temperatures, cleaning enclosures and discussing UVB lighting with the intensity of a professor defending a thesis. Explaining, yet again, that yes, those are frozen mice next to the peas, and no, they're not for tea.

All so they can proudly share photos of their animal sitting on a rock, looking slightly to the left, or asleep in a plant pot. To most people, that's not thrilling. To a keeper, that's a treasured memory, and it's proof they're getting it right.



How to Be Part of It

National Reptile Keeping Day is held every year on 7 November, and the very first one, in 2026, is hosted at Shirley Aquatics. You don't need to be here to take part. Visit your local reptile shop and ask some questions, research a species properly before you buy, take a fresh look at your own setup, and support organisations like Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA. Share what you're doing with #nationalreptilekeepingday.

Each year we'll be fundraising for Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA, so if you'd like to help in a practical way, that's a great place to start.

For the full story, have a read of What Is National Reptile Keeping Day?

The Pragmatic Summary: Why the UK Needs a National Reptile Keeping Day

- Good reptile keeping is demanding, and largely invisible when done well
- A day focused on responsible keeping helps people research before they buy
- It helps cut through contradictory advice and puts the focus on what the animal needs
- It covers everything in a reptile department, not just reptiles
- It's held every 7 November, and you can take part wherever you are
- We fundraise for Responsible Reptile Keeping and the RSPCA

If anyone ever does organise a parade, it'll be a slow one. The tortoises will insist on leading it. It'll still be worth the wait.

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.