

updated March 2017



Range	Southern Europe to Central Asia
Habitat	Burrowing animals; found in temperate climates in dry habitats, rocky hillsides with some cover, and dry stone walls, embankments and stone piles
Diet (wild)	Insects, snails, slugs, mice, bird eggs, baby birds
Diet (captivity)	Crickets, mealworms, young mice
Description	Length: 2–3 feet (tail: 1–2 feet); weight: 1–1 ½ pounds. The adults are rather plainly colored, primarily shades of brown or green. Juveniles have more contrasting markings. They are equipped with powerful jaws and broad and blunt teeth.
Lifespan	Wild: 17–18 years (longer in captivity)
Reproduction	The females lays 6–12 eggs which hatch 6–8 weeks later. Females guard the eggs during the incubation period but abandon the young once they hatch. The young measure 3–6 inches long. Mating usually occurs between June and August. During the breeding season, the female finds a damp spot where they deposit soft-shelled eggs. Females reach sexual maturity at 2–3 years of age.
Behavior	Sheltopusiks are diurnal predators, often active after rainfall (snails and slugs appear to be its favorite prey, which may explain why it is particularly active in wet weather.) Due to their small size, sheltopusiks tend to respond to harassment by hissing, biting, and musking. Like many lizards, they are capable of dropping their tail, although they are less likely to do so than other species. If the tail is lost, it grows back slowly and is shorter and darker. The sheltopusik is a good swimmer.
Our animals	1 undetermined sex. Born: 06/2001 in captivity; donated to PPZ in December 2001
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although legless lizards may look like snakes, sheltopusiks are true lizards, with external ears, movable eyelids, and uniform scales on their belly and back. • Their common name comes from the Russian “желтопузик,” which literally means “yellow-bellied.” • Sheltopusiks are the only living species in the genus <i>Pseudopus</i>. • A released tail may break into pieces, leading to the myth that the lizard can shatter like glass and reassemble itself later, hence its other names “glass lizard” and “glass snake.” • Lateral folds along the sides of the body may aid sheltopusiks in breathing, sensing food, expansion for eating, allowing for space for eggs in females, and detecting sound waves through the soil. • The longest sheltopusik on record was 4 feet.

Phylum
ChordataClass
ReptiliaOrder
SquamataFamily
AnguillidaeGenus
*Pseudopus*species
P. apodus