

Caring for strangers: Alterity, alliances, and reptile conservation in the “gecko garden refuges” in manapany-les-bains, la réunion

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Commonly seen as either dangerous or unsocial, reptiles represent a kind of alterity that is often deemed categorically different from warm-blooded mammals. In the village of Manapany-les-Bains, however, on the island of La Réunion in the Western Indian Ocean, care for the endangered gecko species *Phelsuma inexpectata* has taken an unexpected turn: initiated by a local NGO, village residents have declared their private gardens a gecko-friendly zone. Engaging concepts of multispecies care and alterity, this article explores what caring for a reptile means. Based on ethnographic field research in Manapany-les-Bains, I will discuss how the gecko's otherness remains an ambivalent trope, being both reduced and capitalized on, and that new alliances are exclusionary and fragmented. © Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2020