

Care guide

Destructive Katydid (*Austrosalomona destructor*)



Destructive Katydids are found in far north Queensland in suitable habitats from Cairns to Cape York Peninsula. They have an unfortunate name and were named 'destructor' due to their habit of eating the orchids in the yard of Dr David Rentz, the entomologist that described them. They are robust katydids and grow to around 50mm long. Both sexes are similar in size and as adults, have wings that extend beyond the abdomen. Adult females have a long sabre-like ovipositor (structure for depositing eggs) making the sexes very easy to differentiate.

These katydids are omnivorous and are equipped with large powerful mandibles that enable them to feed on a variety of food types. They feed on an assortment of plant material including seeds, fruits and flowers. They are opportunistic predators and will readily prey upon smaller insects that they are able to overpower.

In order to reproduce, male Destructive Katydids will transfer a spermatophore to the females. A spermatophore is a white-coloured mass that can sometimes be seen at the tip of the female's abdomen after mating has occurred. It contains sperm to fertilise the eggs. Females lay elongated rice-like eggs in the ground using their ovipositor. The young will hatch out looking like miniature wingless versions of their parents and will shed their exoskeletons to grow.

Care guide

Food: Minibeast Wildlife's Katydid Food or Orthopteran Food Mix, fresh dead insects (commercial crickets) and non-citrus fruits including apple, banana and mango.

Water: Mist spray the enclosure once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp and the humidity high. The katydids will drink from the moisture on the foliage and branches if they require it.

Enclosure: An enclosure at least 30cm high with a similar length and width is required to adequately house one or two adults. The base of the enclosure may be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from Minibeast Wildlife) to a depth of at around 5cm. While substrate of this type is not essential, it will accommodate breeding. Sticks and branches should be placed within the enclosure as they are required for the insects to hang from whilst moulting.

Temperature: The safe range is 22 – 28°C, but will tolerate periods of cooler temperatures (overnight lows) of 8°C as long as the temperatures rises back into the safe range during the day. Cooler temperatures will result in a slower growth rate.

Life span: Around 12 months.

Handling: Not recommended. They are a little nervous and unpredictable and may leap away without warning. They also have powerful mandibles, and although not aggressive large specimens could inflict a painful bite if handled roughly.

Reproduction: These katydids can be housed in groups as long as the enclosure is large enough so that individuals are not crowded together. Regular observation is required to avoid potential issues. Mature males will call by rubbing specialised parts of their wings together, thus attracting willing females. The male will deposit a spermatophore whilst his abdomen is locked with hers. A week or two after mating the female will begin laying individual eggs into the substrate. The eggs are rice-like in appearance, and will usually hatch a few months after being laid. The hatchling katydids are hardy, but are relatively slow growing and take many months to mature.

Common issues: If keeping these katydids in groups of high numbers, you may find that some individuals are injured or disrupted during the delicate moulting process. If this happens, your katydids will need more space, so divide your group into multiple enclosures.

NOTE: These animals are captive bred and should not be released into the wild.

For more information contact Minibeast Wildlife at info@minibeastwildlife.com.au