

Care guide

Rainforest Trapdoor Spider (Cataxia species)



Rainforest Trapdoor Spiders are residents of the coastal rainforests of northern Australia. They live within burrows that have a single shaft and a hinged lid that conceals the entrance. Rainforest Trapdoor Spiders are perfectly adapted for their way of life. They are excellent diggers, with their palps and front legs covered in hard spines to assist them to scrape away hard soils and debris.

These spiders are ambush hunters that detect the minute vibrations of invertebrates walking past the entrance to their lair. When suitable prey is detected, the spider rushes out of the door and seizes its prey with its large downward-pointing fangs. The prey is then quickly dragged into the burrow with the burrow closing behind them. The whole event taking little more than a second or two.

They are long-lived spiders which may live well over 10 years. Females spend their whole lives living within their burrows, whereas mature males will come to the surface to look for females to breed with in their final year of life.

Females produce a white silk egg sac which is suspended inside the burrow with silken cables. The egg sac usually contains well in excess of a hundred eggs, which hatch within a couple of months. The spiderlings remain in the burrow with their mother for a few weeks before dispersing to build their own tiny burrows and begin hunting for themselves.

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Food: Live insects. Crickets are ideal. Insects 1/3 of the size of your spider are a good safe size. Feeding once or twice a week is recommended, but young spiders will feed more often when they are growing. Remove live insects from your enclosure if your spider is not hungry.

Water: Keeping the substrate moist will ensure your spider doesn't dehydrate, as sufficient water is usually extracted from the spiders food. Mist spray the substrate as required, if the spider needs water it will emerge from the burrow to drink from droplets of water and moist substrate around the burrow opening.

Enclosure: The enclosure needs to be deep enough to allow the spider to burrow. Screw top tubs make ideal enclosures as do small acrylic terrariums. For juvenile spiders the substrate depth should be a minimum of 5cm, and this can be increased intermittently as the spider grows. Adult spiders require a minimum substrate depth of 10cm. Coco-peat is an ideal substrate and should be kept moist, but not excessively wet or sodden.

These spiders cannot climb smooth surface, but a secure lid is still recommended.

Temperature: Low 20's is ideal, this species will tolerate temperatures below 10°C periodically and above 25°C. Temperatures approaching 30°C may cause heat stress and death – avoid these higher temperatures.

Humidity: It is important to keep a relatively high humidity of around 60-90%.

Life span: Over 5 years, possibly over 10.

Handling: Not recommended as they can be defensive and give a painful bite.

Common issues: These spiders may go for extended periods without feeding (many weeks) when moulting or during periods of cooler temperatures. As they are burrow dwellers, it can seem difficult to check on them without digging them up and destroying their burrow. One simple way of checking if your is still ok is by opening the lid and leaving it ajar. The spider should come up to close it after a while if it ok. You may also be able to look down the burrow with a torch to see the spider. Remove any live food in the enclosure if doing this to prevent them entering the burrow.

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