

Care guide

Northern Badge Huntsman, *Neosparassus salacius*



Northern Badge Huntsman belong to a group of huntsmen known as Badge Huntsmen named due to the badge-like pattern on the underside of their abdomen. They are found in tropical north Queensland in savannah scrub, living in the foliage of small trees, shrubs and tall grasses. They are a moderate sized huntsman growing up to a body length of 20 mm, and a leg span of around 80mm. They feed on a wide range of other invertebrates including moths, crickets, cockroaches and other spiders. They are covered in fine sensory hairs which are extremely sensitive to air movement. This assists them in detect the movement of prey and the approach of predators.

Like all huntsmen they are extremely fast and have the ability to run sideways and squeeze into relatively narrow crevices. Lion Huntsman, like other members of the *Neosparassus* genus, live within foliage rather than beneath bark like larger flatter huntsmen. They create nests to shelter in by binding leaves together with strong silk.

Northern Badge Huntsmen lay their eggs encased within a disc-shaped white silk egg sac. They do this within their leafy nests and stay with their eggs until after they hatch. The bright green young emerge 30 - 60 days after being laid (they will develop faster in warmer conditions) and several hundred spiderlings may emerge from a single egg sac. The spiderlings will cluster around their mother for several weeks after they emerge and will tolerate each other during this stage. Once they disperse any chance meetings of the siblings will often result in one eating the other.

These spiders grow by shedding their outer skeleton (exoskeleton). This process is called ecdysis or moulting. To moult successfully they need to hang uninterrupted beneath a leaf or branch. Their colour darkens and they stop feeding a few days before moulting, and once they begin to moult they usually complete the process in about 10 minutes. They usually will not feed for about 24 hours after moulting. Males and females can be identified as they mature; males have enlarged bulbs on the ends of their pedipalps (feelers) which females lack, and males tend to have thin bodies and longer legs.

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Food: Live insects. Crickets, cockroaches, moths and flies are ideal. The food insects should be no larger than 1/3 of the size of your spider. Feeding 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: Mist spray lightly around your spider every second day – it will drink the droplets.

Enclosure: The enclosure needs to be large enough to allow your spider to shed its exoskeleton properly. An ideal enclosure should be higher than it is wide, as this species likes to climb upwards. Jars or plastic containers make great homes for young spiders, and plastic or glass terrariums are good for larger specimens. Flat pieces of bark can be added to your enclosure to give the spider something to climb on and hide behind. They will also utilise foliage to hide and nest within, and artificial plants are perfectly fine for this purpose. Ensure the enclosure is not placed in direct sunlight as this may cause it to overheat. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation in your enclosure; fly wire mesh is ideal but ensure there are no gaps which allow the spider to get out.

Temperature: This species will do best at 20– 26°C but will tolerate cooler temperatures for intermittent periods.

Humidity: This species requires a relatively high humidity of 60 – 80%, but don't like excessive moisture or dank wet conditions. Having some moist sphagnum moss in the substrate is a good way of raising the humidity without having too much excessive moisture. Good ventilation is beneficial.

Life span: 1- 2 years.

Handling: Direct handling is not recommended. Although these spiders are not dangerously venomous, adults do have large fangs, can become defensive and could give a painful bite. If you need to transfer them, they can be easily guided into a jar or plastic container.

Common issues: Due to their climbing ability and fast speed, these spiders are excellent escape artists! Ensure there are no gaps around the lid or doors of your enclosure, and take care not to allow your spider to run out when opening it.

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