CARE GUIDE

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FLINDERS RANGES SCORPION

Urodacus elongatus



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PROFILE

This species originates from the semi-arid Flinders Ranges in South Australia, about 500km north of Adelaide. It is one of Australia's largest scorpions with females reaching around 100mm in total length, and the males (with longer tails) reaching around 120mm.

Flinders Ranges Scorpions are 'scrape dwellers', meaning that they live in narrow spaces that they scrape out beneath rocks and logs within their habitat. At night they will hunt by waiting in ambush for prey around the entrance of their daytime retreat. They will wait perfectly still for hours with their claws (chelae) outstretched waiting to detect the minute vibrations of approaching prey. Prey consists of other invertebrates including crickets, cockroaches and spiders, which are grabbed with the scorpions' powerful chelae and then injected with venom. The venom works quickly and effectively on invertebrates, however is not medically significant to humans.

This species, like others in the genus *Urodacus,* are relatively slow-growing. Flinders Ranges Scorpions take four or five years to mature, sometimes longer. They also have an extremely long gestation period for an invertebrate of around 18 months before giving birth to live young.

Unfortunately this species is heavily targeted by commercial collectors seeking to exploit them in the pet trade, some even poaching them within the National Park regions. As they are scrape-dwellers they are relatively easy to find, and in some areas, collectors not only decimate the scorpion population, but damage the ecosystem by flipping rocks and not replacing them. The slow growth and reproduction rate of these scorpions makes them extremely vulnerable to impacts from such collectors.

The best action invertebrate keepers can take to help to conserve this species is to avoid purchasing adult or large specimens from pet shops and other invertebrate traders as these are almost certainly wild-caught individuals. Seeking captive bred alternatives is better both from a conservation perspective and also from a health perspective as the scorpions are of a known age, parasite free and not stressed from being taken from the wild.

FOOD

Live or freshly dead insects once or twice weekly. Crickets are ideal. Insects about ¼ to ½ the body size of the scorpion are recommended. Dead insects may be fed to the scorpion via forceps or tweezers, but they will also pick up freshly dead insects off the ground. Remove any uneaten food or leftovers after 24 hours.

WATER

This species requires very little water, and gets much of its water from its food. Keeping some of the substrate moist within your scorpions' enclosure will prevent the scorpion dehydrating. If you notice the scorpion constantly in the moist areas of the enclosure it may be seeking additional water. You can also add a dish (or bottle lid) with a moist cotton wool ball or sponge inside for this purpose

ENCLOSURE

A plastic or glass terrarium is an ideal enclosure for your scorpion, with a minimum size of 20cmH x 20cmW x 15cmD for an adult. Place sand, or a mix of sand and coco-peat substrate in the bottom of the enclosure to a depth of around 5cm, with a moisture gradient (see below). Place a flat rock or bark in the enclosure as a shelter for your scorpion.

SUBSTRATE

Sand, or a mix of sand and coco-peat is an ideal substrate, and ideally should have a moisture gradient (a dry end and moist end to the enclosure). This should be at least 5cm deep to allow your scorpion to create a retreat. Additional objects (bark, rocks etc) may be added to allow your scorpion to shelter beneath them. Ensure heavy items such as rocks are very stable and take care when moving them to avoid crushing the scorpion.

TEMPERATURE

This species will tolerate a wide temperature range from 5 - 35°C, although it is best to avoid these extremes. They do best and will be most active at 22 – 26°C. Cooler seasonal temperatures overnight are not harmful as long as the day time temperatures reach their optimal zone. They will become inactive and not feed at lower temperatures.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove any uneaten food or food waste that appears. If any mould or fungi starts to grow in the enclosure, remove as needed. A complete substrate change may be required if the enclosure is overgrown with fungi. Otherwise, a substrate change is only necessary once a year at most.

HANDLING

These scorpions are generally inoffensive and reluctant to sting, however can deliver a mild venom. Too much interaction can stress the scorpion.

COMMON ISSUES

This species can be cannibalistic and should be kept individually to avoid issues. They can climb rough or textured surfaces (and the bead of silicone in the corners of aquariums). Ensure that an escape proof lid is fitted to prevent escape if such surfaces are present.

8 - 12 years life span

These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild

60 - 70%



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