



*Jeremy Arrington

Bark Scorpions (*Centruroides* spp.)

New World Natives that can Pack a Punch

Bark scorpions belong to a large genus of North American scorpions consisting of at least 70 species or more depending on taxonomy. Members of this genus are found throughout much of the southern United States, Mexico, Central America, and into northern South America. At least 41 of these species, and 24 subspecies are recognized as valid. These small, fast moving scorpions may be found under leaves, loose bark, dark crevices, under or within trash and debris, and nearly any other sources for cover. As with many other scorpions, bark scorpions also contain properties within their exo-skeletons that enable them to glow a turquoise bluish-green under a fluorescent UV light. These scorpions also possess additional sensory hairs on their claws, legs, and tail that enable them to detect the vibrations of potential prey through the air and the ground. Several species in the United States and elsewhere can be highly potent or medically significant species, with some fatalities having been recorded from some species. Therefore, this genera requires careful handling and care by the experienced enthusiast.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Subphylum: Chelicerata

Class: Arachnida

Order: Scorpiones

Family: Buthidae

Genus: *Centruroides*

Species: *Centruroides* spp.*

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Bark scorpions can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more if cared for correctly.

Distribution and Habitat

Bark scorpions are a genus of relatively slender built, small to medium sized scorpions indigenous to many tropical to sub-tropical, and/or arid to semi-arid regions of the New World. While more precise ranges and locality information is dependent upon the exact species, species of bark scorpions generally occur throughout the southern United States, Mexico and throughout Central America, the Caribbean and Antilles, and into northern South America. Within this range, bark scorpions can be found in a variety of tropical to sub-tropical, to semi-arid habitats, where they occupy self-excavated burrows, burrows constructed by other animals, and underneath vegetation, rocks, logs, and other ground debris. They may also occupy areas of dense foliage and vegetation, tree hollows and cavities, and among the branches, trunks, and loose vertical bark of trees and other shrubby vegetation.

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Legal and Regulatory Status (*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced.

Size

Bark scorpions are small sized to medium sized species, reaching anywhere from 1 ½ to 3 ½ inches on average.

Housing and Enclosure

Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 10 gallons in size with a secure top for one or two adult scorpions. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used. Bark scorpions can be kept communally provided sufficient enclosure space, food, and other resources. Acceptable substrate to use can include slightly moist pesticide play sand or aquarium sand, coconut fiber, or potting soil mixtures 3 to 4 inches in depth. Decorations and/or other cage furnishings and hide boxes, cork, rock, or bark slabs can also be included as well for additional retreats that these nocturnal to crepuscular and secretive scorpions prefer. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly. Maintain humidity at 55 to 60% with some sphagnum moss as well if needed.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Most species of scorpions have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for your scorpion's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Bark scorpions do best at room temperature between 75 to 85 degrees. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

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Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, bark scorpions are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally eat smaller vertebrates as well if they can catch and subdue them. In captivity, these scorpions can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Any uneaten food items should be cleaned and removed after a day or two. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed even invertebrates, as obesity and other health related issues can still become an issue with them. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Bark scorpions are a fast moving species that may readily sting when disturbed. Several species in the United States and elsewhere also can have quite potent and medically significant venom as well; therefore these scorpions should be handled with caution or otherwise is not recommended. Scorpions in general are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping one can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your scorpion. Medical attention should always be sought from any apparent allergic reaction to a sting from this or any scorpion species. ****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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