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Horned Baboon Tarantulas (*Ceratogyrus* spp.)

Horned African Burrowers

Horned baboon tarantulas are a medium sized to large, sandy or tawny brown, yellowish, to grayish spiders with darker, ornate markings on the abdomen and carapace. The most distinguishable feature of many species in this genus are the large foveal horns on the carapace/pelidium.

Horned baboons, as with many tarantulas are nocturnal to crepuscular fossorial, or burrowing species, and like other tarantulas, will often act as ambush predators of insects, other invertebrates, and even small mammals or birds using silk threads to detect potentially approaching prey. Nine (9) species are currently recognized. The most commonly seen and kept species in the trade include the Rhino/Great Horned Baboon (*C. brachycephalus*), Rear Horned Baboon (*C. darlingi*), Straight Horned Baboon (*C. marshalli*), Sandy Horned Baboon (*C. sanderi*), and Zimbabwe Horned Baboon (*C. meridionalis*).

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Subphylum: Chelicerata

Class: Arachnida

Order: Araneae

Infraorder: Mygalomorphae

Family: Theraphosidae

Genus: *Ceratogyrus*

Species: *Ceratogyrus* spp.*

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Males of many tarantula species will often attain life spans of only 5 to 6 years. Females attain considerably longer life spans of 15 to 20 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

The horned baboon tarantulas are a genus of relatively medium sized to large, terrestrial to fossorial Old World species of tarantulas indigenous to a broad range of southern Africa. More specifically, and depending upon the exact species, these reclusive and oftentimes unusual

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species can occur in Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, to Namibia and Lesotho. Within this broad range, these burrowing species of tarantulas can occur in the dry, tropical to sub-tropical open forests and woodlands, to savannahs, grasslands, scrubland, and semi-deserts, where they occupy self-excavated burrows, burrows constructed by other animals, and underneath vegetation, rocks, logs, and other ground debris.

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

Horned baboon tarantulas are medium-sized to large tarantulas reaching a total legspan of about 4 to 6 inches on average.

Housing and Enclosure

Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 10 gallons long in size with a secure top for a single adult spider. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used. Spiderlings can be housed in an appropriately sized spiderling vial, plastic container or deli cup with adequate holes for ventilation. Acceptable substrate to use can include pesticide free potting soil, coconut fiber, vermiculite, or similar substrates 3 to 4 inches in depth. Decorations and/or other cage furnishings can also be included as well, although floor space is more important than height. This is a primarily terrestrial to burrowing species, but benefits from branches, horizontal cork bark, and plants for refuge. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly as well as regular misting for hydration.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Most species of tarantulas 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 tarantula's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Horned baboon tarantulas are a fairly hardy species that will tolerate ambient temperatures of as low as 65 degrees F. Typically, however, they may be kept at an ambient temperature of 78 to 82 degrees. Weekly and monthly regular misting will also help maintain humidity. Maintain at 65 to 70% humidity but the enclosure must have adequate ventilation and substrate be kept dry. 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

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, horned baboon tarantulas 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 tarantulas can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms,

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and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. This will promote optimal exoskeleton growth and development. 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

The horned baboons are well known for being a very defensive species that can also be fast moving. Although bites from this species are typically not serious or medically significant, they do deliver a painful and unpleasant bite with potentially potent venom and are not suitable spiders for beginners. Therefore, handling these species typically is not recommended. Horned baboons are better suited as a more advanced spider overall. In general, tarantulas are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping a spider can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your tarantula. Although most tarantulas are not medically significant, with most being lesser than or just about equal to a bee sting, medical attention should still be sought from any apparent allergic reaction to a bite, or extreme irritation from urticating hairs from a pet tarantula, particularly from this genus.

****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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