



Vampire Crabs (*Geosesarma* spp.)

Vampire Look-Alikes

Also known as the purple and yellow vampire crabs, carnival crabs, or panther crabs, vampire crabs belong to a genus of approximately 50 terrestrial to freshwater crab species inhabiting much of southern to southeastern Asia, depending on the species. Vampire crabs earn their names from their ghastly and goulash, yet colorful appearance, with yellowish, orangish, to reddish eyes. These crabs may be quite variable in color, with their carapaces ranging from bluish, purplish, to reddish or reddish-orange, and their pincers and limbs being paler or lighter colored blue, to reddish in color. Vampire crabs as a genus are terrestrial crabs that reproduce terrestrially or in freshwater independently from saline or saltwater conditions, and are primarily nocturnal to crepuscular scavengers, feeding and foraging on a variety of plant and animal material during dawn and dusk. Much remains to be known about these species' habits and distribution, and species appearing in the pet trade are uncertain as to their exact species. However, vampire crabs have recently become popular crabs to maintain in the pet trade over recent years.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Subphylum: Crustacea

Class: Malacostraca

Order: Decapoda

Infraorder: Brachyura

Family: Sesarmidae

Genus: *Geosesarma*

Species: *Geosesarma* spp.*

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

Under the correct husbandry and care, vampire crabs can be expected to attain longevity of at least 2 to 3 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Vampire crabs are indigenous to the tropical to sub-tropical terrestrial forests and freshwater

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water bodies over much of southern to southeastern Asia, from India, through the Solomon Islands depending on the species. Most specimens in the pet trade perhaps originate from the Sulawesi coast and surrounding areas.

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

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Adult vampire crabs typically range from less than ½ an inch to about 1 ½ inches in carapace length. Their leg span reaches up to 2 ½ inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Vampire crabs should be housed in a secure, sturdy, adequately ventilated terrarium, aquarium, or other enclosure. These crabs may be kept communally, meaning they are often found in groups, and multiple crabs can be housed together provided an adequately sized enclosure is accordingly provided, although males may fight. A 10 to 20 gallon or similar sized enclosure or larger depending on the number of crabs maintained is suitable. Crabs that are not provided adequate space may fight and possibly kill one another for resources. A substrate that enables these vampire crabs to dig and burrow, as well as maintain adequate humidity should also be provided. Sand substrates as well as peat or sphagnum moss, Java moss, or mixtures thereof can be used for added security and stimuli including driftwood, artificial foliage, and hides in the form of log or slab hides, rocks, clay flower pots, or other commercially designed hides and cage decor. These furnishings will provide these crabs with climbing, hiding, and perching opportunities.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Adequate humidity is perhaps one of the most important factors for maintaining vampire crabs, which should be around 70%. Provide at least two large, shallow water dishes that the crabs can readily enter or exit or otherwise a 50 to 75% terrestrial to aquatic ratio setup or enclosure. A temperature gradient should also be provided in the enclosure, with around 70 to 85 degrees F for ambient and around 70 to 75 degrees F for water temperatures. Water pH levels should be maintained at around 7.5 to 8.5. Crabs that are exposed to direct sunlight or heat constantly may overheat. 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

Detritivorous to Omnivorous; In the wild, vampire crabs are omnivorous scavengers, feeding on small bits of organic plant and animal matter they are able to locate during foraging. In captivity, a varied, rotating diet for these crabs is recommended. A variety of fruit and vegetable matter will be eaten, as well as freeze dried plankton, krill, feeder crickets, mealworms, waxworms, superworms, redworms, earthworms, or shrimp. Some commercially available fish foods can

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also be given. An adequate calcium and vitamin D3 based diet and supplementation is also recommended for these crab's optimal exoskeleton growth and development. 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

Vampire crabs can be handled carefully, although they may pinch (which is not painful or dangerous). They can be allowed to walk on one's hands. Care should be taken to not drop them, however, since this can fracture their shell and/or cause internal injury to them.

****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

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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