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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Common Spider Tortoise

Pyxis arachnoides

Pyxis arachnoides is a small, critically endangered tortoise from the dry spiny forests along the south-west coast of Madagascar. The shell is high and domed with a web-like pattern, and adults are 10-12 cm long and weigh 200-400 g. The species is rare in captivity and reproduces slowly, and little is known about its care.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Pyxis aranoides; Bellemys arachnoides*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**10-15 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**200-400 g**
Lifespan	**50-70 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-30 °C**
Basking spot	**32-38 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and plants**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**220-330 days** at 29-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix I**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little documented information exists on the care of *Pyxis arachnoides*. The species is kept and bred mainly in zoos and by specialists.
TEMPERATURE	The animal must be kept warm. During the day the temperature should be 24-30 °C, with a basking spot of 32-38 °C under a heat lamp at one end, measured on the substrate. At night the temperature drops to 18-22 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be around 50-70 %. The figure is borrowed from *Astrochelys radiata* and should be seen as a starting point. Keep the substrate slightly damp, and mist the enclosure now and then.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*P. arachnoides* is diurnal. Natural sunlight is best, and indoors the species needs UVB light with a basking spot in Ferguson zone 3. The zone is borrowed from *Astrochelys radiata* and has not been measured for the species.
FEEDING	In the wild *P. arachnoides* eats young leaves, flowers, fruit, insect larvae and the droppings of larger animals.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	Handle the animal as little as possible, especially young animals. When threatened it withdraws its head, legs and tail into the shell.
NATIVE RANGE	Madagascar.