

# Keeping Rainbow Land Crabs

## Introduction to Rainbow Land Crabs

The Rainbow Crab - *Armatum garcarrims* is like all other crabs actually a crustacean. This particular creature is not aquatic like most crabs but instead lives most of its life on the waters edge where it digs deep burrows in river banks.

*Armatum garcarrims* is a species from West Africa and although it is a land living crab it must have access to water in order to keep its lungs wet, if they dry out then the crab will quickly die. Water is also needed for reproduction.



## Housing Rainbow Crabs

These crabs do not have a large range but instead they patrol their 'patch' on the rivers edge, this is good news for those wishing to keep these fascinating creatures in captivity. A standard 24 x 12 x 15 inch aquarium is fine for up to 2 medium to large sized crabs, keeping more together would result in fighting and probably the loss of at least one of the crabs.



The best way to keep these crabs is to re create the river bank edge where they would be found. This will involve making a sloping bank leading to a 3 inch deep water area.

As these crabs need to create a burrow in which to retreat and also shed their exoskeleton the substrate should allow this. Fine aquarium sand or Zoo Med Repti Sand both make excellent substrates and when wet will allow a burrow to be created which will hold its shape.

You will need at least 15kg of sand for the tank size mentioned above, this will allow you to build an artificial bank that is at least 8 inches deep at the deepest end sloping down to around 1 inch at the water end. In order to prevent the sand from simply washing down in to the water you will need to create some form of dam. You can use partially buried rocks or a chunk of bog wood, only add the rocks or wood as a line across the tank and not within the deep sand area, this would prevent the crabs from forming burrows.

To keep the water clean you can use a small water filter like a Zoo Med Micro Clean filter, these will filter out any debris. You can also add other things to the water area, I add a few water snails to the water to eat up any uneaten food and also eat any algae that grows. If you want to add some small fish then you may do but remember that the crabs may catch and eat them!

## Temperature for Rainbow Crabs

Keeping Rainbow Crabs at the right temperature is very simple. Under the water end of the tank place an 11 x 11 inch heat mat, you wont need to use a thermostat as the water and heat will also be drawn in to the sand area which is unheated. This will create the right temperature in the burrows. If you are going to put a lid on the tank then you WILL need to use a temperature thermostat for the heater otherwise the whole tank can over heat, set the temperature to 22C.

## Feeding Rainbow Crabs

Rainbow Crabs are omnivorous and would normally eat whatever washes up on the shoreline. Commercially available food for hermit crabs is good but also crickets which have been killed, fish flakes, apple, potato and small bits of raw fish will also be taken. You should remove any uneaten food every day as the crabs are intolerant of foul food and it will help prevent bacteria and odors.

## Breeding Rainbow Crabs

Breeding Rainbow Crabs is very difficult (actually I don't know anyone who has) because they require a large volume of water, this can be saline or brackish. The female releases hundreds of thousands of eggs which once fertilised will hatch and become floating plankton.