

LAND HERMIT CRABS

This habit of living in a second-hand shell gives rise to the popular name "hermit crab", by analogy to a hermit who lives alone.

Land hermit crabs are a crustacean & like their aquatic cousins have a hard external shell.

However, the back half of the body is soft to protect it, they use the shells of deceased sea snails as a home.

Although they live on land, they have gills like a fish & keep these moist by carrying water in their shell.

In the wild they are found on the tip of the Northern Territory coastline & on the north coast of Western Australia. Although they can reach the size of a tennis ball, most of those kept in captivity reach no more than the size of a marble.

They are easy to keep, with the basic requirements being a hermit crab enclosure & a heat mat.

You will need to add to this sufficient gravel or shell grit so they can bury themselves in the bottom of the tank, peat, a bowl of fresh water & a bowl of salt water & some food. The salt water bowl is used for bathing & the fresh water is for drinking.

Their enclosure should contain a substrate of peat at one end & shell grit or gravel up the other end to mimic their natural environmental conditions.

As they are from the north of Australia, they are accustomed to higher temperatures & high humidity.

The humid environment can be recreated by misting the tank with water a few times a day & the heat can be maintained by using a heat-mat, which is essential in winter due to our colder climate.

As hermit crabs grow they need to move into larger shells & about 2 - 3 shells for each crab is a good number to have in their enclosure. Hermit crabs do not smell unless overfed & other than fresh water each day, maintenance is fairly minimal.

Land hermit crabs require a visit into the ocean to breed so there is no risk of unwanted little crabs in the enclosure. Land hermit crabs are a great first pet for children. They can bring them hours of pleasure as well as helping them learn how to care for living creatures.

