



Portsmouth Reptile & Amphibian Society
P.O Box 16
Portsmouth
PO2 9BW

P.R.A.S Care sheet No 10



Species Common Name: **Assassin Bugs**

Scientific Name: *Platymeris biguttata* ,
Platymeris rhadamanthus

Warning! The piercing snout of the Assassin Bug can be directed and venom squirted into the eyes. Stings from these bugs can also be very painful and can easily become infected. Therefore they should never be handled with bare hands. Consider the use of forceps and always wear safety glasses.

Care Difficulty: Easy.

Distribution:

P. biguttata, hails from West Africa including Senegal, Blue Nile and lake Malawi regions.
P. rhadamanthus, from Southern and Eastern African areas such as Kenya and Tanzania.

Description:

P. biguttata is black with two white spots. *P. rhadamanthus* has two red spots.

Size:

Adults can grow to about 40mm in length, the females tend to be slightly smaller than the males.

Housing:

A 20x20x30cm (8x8x12") tank or secure, ventilated plastic box will be adequate for a small group of 8-10 adults, provided there are sufficient hiding places and food available. The substrate can be soil, peat, bark chippings or dry vermiculite. The latter is probably the cleanest to use. The substrate should be a minimum of 5cm (2") deep. There should be several pieces of cork bark and branches for the bugs to hide under. Most of the time, the bugs will hide under these, only appearing briefly for food. The tank should be

well ventilated, but make sure any lids are tight fitting. Assassin bugs are very good climbers even on smooth surfaces such as plastic.

These bugs require temperatures of between 20-30°C (68-86°F). This can be achieved by placing a heat mat under 1/3 of the base of the tank. This will produce a thermal gradient, allowing the bugs to move from hotter to cooler areas as they require. The humidity required is 60-80%, which is easily achievable by spraying once a week.

Diet and Feeding:

Both species are predatory carnivores. They will take most of the commercially available live foods, such as crickets, mealworms and wax worms. The prey item should not be larger than the bug itself. The prey is hunted down, held by the front legs and paralysed by injected poison, and sucked out. A medium to large cricket will feed an adult bug for a week. Always ensure the bugs are well fed to avoid cannibalism. The young nymphs will require feeding on *Drosophila* (fruit flies) for the first few weeks.

Breeding:

Assassin bugs are believed to be parthenogenic, (mating not required to produce offspring), but many keepers have reported that they have observed mating. Females have slightly wider thorax than males, but this is very difficult to distinguish. In order to achieve breeding it is a good idea to buy a small colony.

The bugs do not use a nest, so they can deposit eggs without much warning, and anywhere in the tank. However you can encourage them to use one spot by providing a small tub of dampened vermiculite. The female will deposit several small dark round / oval eggs about 1-1.5mm in diameter. These will turn paler then slightly reddish over the three-eight week incubation period.

The nymphs are a miniature replica of the adults, except they have a red body and black and brown/orange head and legs. They will have their first molt after about two weeks. They do not have their twin spots until after their final adult molt. Once the nymphs have been spotted in the tank, they should be removed to a small well ventilated but very secure tub. They will begin feeding on fruit flies, with the food size increasing as they grow. Adequate food should always be available to avoid cannibalism. Damp tissue or cotton wool should be kept in the tub to raise humidity for the nymphs. This should be sprayed daily.

REFERENCES :

The Complete Encyclopedia of the Terrarium Eugene Bruins

Easy Exotics website