

African Emperor Scorpion (*Pandinus imperator*)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in tropical rainforests of West Africa.

Size: Up to 8 inches, including tail.

Wild Diet: Insects, other scorpions and other small prey.

Predators: Birds, bats, large spiders, small mammals, lizards, centipedes, parasitic wasps, other scorpions and humans

Life Span: 5-8 years (captive); unknown in the wild.

Reproduction: Emperor scorpions are sexually mature at about three years. They take part in a courtship dance where the male grasps female by the pinchers. He then leads her to an acceptable place where he can deposit a spermatophore on a solid surface. He positions her over it, and she retrieves the spermatophore with her cloaca. After a 9-18 month (depending on temperature and food availability) gestation, an average of 12 “scorplings” are born live. The mother scorpion will provide food, protection, and a ride on her back until the scorplings are large enough to fend for themselves.

Behavior: Dig burrows with first 2 pairs of legs. Most active in the evening. Catch prey with pinchers and then strike with the stinger on their tail. Venom is mild, and to a human it is less painful than a bee sting. Emperor scorpions have been observed in groups in the wild, with mothers and offspring gathered together in colonial burrows.

Conservation Connection: Listed as CITES Appendix II, meaning that they are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled. Threats include loss of wild habitat and capture for the pet trade.

Interesting Facts: One of the largest species of scorpion in the world. Usually glossy black, may be dark brown or green, stinger and claws can have reddish color. Offspring are born white, color becomes darker with each molt.

