



*\*Fangs & Fashion*

## Tailless Whipscorpions (Order Amblypygi)

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### **Oddball Arachnids**

Also known as Amblypygids, or whip spiders, tailless whipscorpions are a group of arachnids consisting of approximately 17 genera and 155 species as of 2015 that are neither true spiders nor true scorpions. These unusual arachnids have broad, dorsoventrally flattened bodies with a segmented abdomen, three pairs of walking legs, a large jointed pair of pedipalps, and a pair of very long, whip-like modified pair of anterior facing legs with numerous sensory receptors used for navigation and sensory purposes to locate prey in their dark and humid microenvironments. Members of the tailless whipscorpion family then will use their spiny pedipalps and chelicerae to seize and consume smaller prey once it is located.

Although there are many different species of tailless whip scorpion (also sometimes called whip spiders, as previously mentioned), among the most common in the pet trade are *Charinus pescotti*, *Damon diadema*, *Damon medius*, *Damon variegatus*, and *Phrynus marginemaculatus*. Despite their fearsome appearance however, tailless whipscorpions are not venomous, and are harmless to humans, but some can deliver a somewhat painful bite or pinch if handled carelessly. They are a fairly primitive order of arachnids, with fossilized specimens dating as far back as the Carboniferous period, and their name of “amblypygid” essentially means “blunt rump” in reference to the absence of a telson, stinger, or flagellum.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Subphylum:** Chelicerata

**Class:** Arachnida

**Order:** Amblypygi

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

Tailless whipscorpions can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more if cared for correctly.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

Tailless whipscorpions, or amplygids, are a largely cosmopolitan order of unusual arachnids

found in tropical to sub-tropical regions throughout most of worldwide. While more precise ranges are largely dependent upon the genera and species of these odd arachnids, members of this order can occur from tropical to sub-tropical North and South America, Africa, Asia, and portions of Australia. Within these ranges, these unusual arachnids can be found in a variety of dark, humid, and moist tropical to sub-tropical, to semi-arid habitats, where they occupy self-excavated burrows, burrows constructed by other animals, and underneath vegetation, rocks, logs, and other ground debris. They may also occupy areas of dense foliage and vegetation, tree hollows and cavities, and among the branches, trunks, and loose vertical bark of trees and other shrubby vegetation.

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Depending on the species, tailless whipscorpions can be small to large arachnids ranging in size from 2 to up to 24 inches including their total leg-span.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Fossorial.*** Tailless whipscorpions are secretive, nocturnal to crepuscular arachnids that usually will show aversion to excessive light. They are also more active wanderers than most tarantulas or other commonly kept arachnids, and should be provided with adequate space. Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 20 gallons in size with a secure top for one or two adult tailless whipscorpions. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used. These arachnids can be kept communally provided sufficient enclosure space, but may cannibalize if these conditions are not met. Tailless whip scorpions will burrow in 6 to 8 inches of substrate when provided. Acceptable substrate to use can include slightly moist pesticide free potting soil, cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, coconut fiber, or similar substrates. Sufficient hiding opportunities for these reclusive arachnids and other cage furnishings and hide boxes, cork, or bark slabs, and similar furniture should also be provided. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly. Depending on the species, maintain humidity at 70 to 90% with some sphagnum moss as well for tropical species, while humidity can be lower at around 65 to 75% for desert or arid dwelling species.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Most species of tailless whipscorpions have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for your arachnid's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Tailless whip scorpions do best at room temperature between 65 to 85 degrees. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Humidity levels can vary depending on the exact species being kept, although most prefer moderate to high humidity at around 60 to 75%.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Insectivorous to Carnivorous;*** In the wild, tailless whipscorpions are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally eat smaller vertebrates as well if they can catch and subdue them. In captivity, these unusual arachnids can

be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. This will promote optimal exoskeleton growth and development. Any uneaten food items should be cleaned and removed after a day or two. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed even invertebrates, as obesity and other health related issues can still become an issue with them. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Despite their fearsome appearance, tailless whipscorpions do not have fangs, stingers, or venom, and are harmless to humans. They can be handled, but typically scuttle very quickly sideways, and can be skittish and fast moving however. They may also give the occasional pinch or nip with their enlarged pedipalps if roughly handled as well. As with most invertebrates, they are also fragile animals, and accidentally dropping one can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your tailless whipscorpion.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

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