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HARPACTIRELLA LIGHTFOOTI BREEDING

MARIA AND LASZLO GOMBÁSNÉ-GUDENUS (HUNGARY)

We have been keeping tarantulas since 2008 and we had our first successful breeding in 2009. From the first moment our goal was to keep and breed species that nobody else had bred before us here in Hungary. We really loved the baboon spiders and only few people kept them here. *Harpactirella lightfooti* is particularly dear to our hearts, so we want to tell you about the first *H. lightfooti* breeding in Hungary.

In the Winter of 2009 we bought 3 specimens of *Harpactirella lightfooti* that were at about 4th or 5th moult from a German breeder. They were all kept slightly warmer than room temperature, averaging 25-26°C and raised in a terrarium of the appropriate size. One half of the terrarium was kept wet, the other dry. *H. lightfooti* lived on the dry side, but they went to the wet one and appeared to drink freshly sprayed water. We didn't change the temperature day and night – the only different was the normal nightly temperature drop of around 2-3°C.

We fed them 2-3 times weekly as, despite their small size, they are very voracious animals and develop relatively quickly.



Fig. 1

Three moults later, in March 2010, the colour of the spider with the biggest body size underwent a remarkable change. We checked the skin and were satisfied that it was a female (**Fig. 1**). Her colour became darker and the feet were dark blue.

This colour was the same as the adult females we had seen in the photos of this species we found on the internet at that time. Her body was only 2cm! Because this is such a small size we couldn't believe that she was really an adult female.

The other two juveniles were later to moult and we were uncertain of their gender (**Fig. 2**).



Fig. 2

On the 9th April, one of the unsexed juveniles moulted and we were surprised to see that it had become a beautiful adult male (**Fig. 3**)! Consequently, we quickly bought two adult females and both were mated to the male at the end of April.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

We didn't try to mate our own young female with this male because we thought that she had one more moult to go before she was sexually mature.

The two new females were both mated with the male in late May and early June, two weeks different, even though we didn't know the date of their last moult. (**Fig. 4**).

After the matings, within a short period of time, both females laid egg-sacs (**Figs. 5 and 6**). We did not change the housing conditions intentionally, but it should be noted that the weather was extremely hot that summer. The day-time temperature increased to 28-30°C in the room and at night was only 1-2°C lower.

We opened the first eggsac 22 days after it was produced; they were L2 nymphs. They underwent their first moult 12 days later. They were huge larvae and 1st moult spiderlings (**Fig. 7**). Interestingly, to illustrate the size, at the same time we had *Ceratogyrus marshalli* spiderlings and the *H. lightfooti* larvae of the same stage were perhaps even larger than the 1st moult *C. marshalli*!

In September 2010, six months after our bred female's moult, the third, unsexed juvenile from the same sac was moulted. He became an adult male so we decided to mate him with his



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

sister – even though her size suggested otherwise, her colour indicated that she was an adult spider her to be an adult spider (**Fig. 8**).

Our conclusion was correct, because this small female laid an eggsac too, two months after mating.

By this time we were in the middle of winter, the room temperature was around 23°C.



Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Male

A lamp for the living room helped to raise the temperature to the preferred 26-28°C.

Over the next two years, we mated our females a further 9 times and purchased several additional adult females, but none produced eggsacs. Neither the housing conditions nor the food changed, only the place in the room changed, as they were transferred to a shelf-system in another part of the room.

In October 2012 finally we mated our home-grown female, who came out of our third breeding. From this mating we got two eggsacs in February and March 2013 from which 29 little *H. lightfooti* came out.

After we removed the eggsac, the female moulted very quickly and we mated her to a male (also from our own breeding programme) in April.

The female laid an eggsac in August. We didn't remove this one, but were surprised because the nymphs emerged from the eggsac in a really short space of time – on the 19th day (Fig. 9).

This too was during the summer when weather is more conducive to thermophilic species.

In the last three years we mated *Harpactirella lightfooti* 13 times. They laid eggsacs only 5 times, but all of these 5 eggsacs were healthy!

Female

female	moult	mating	sac laid	sac opening	first moult	number of slings	bad eggs or died larvae
1st	unknown	23.05.10	22.06.10	14.07.10 (L2)	26.07.10	34	–
2nd	unknown	05.06.10	07.07.10	28.07.10 (L2)	10.08.10	15	11
3rd (grown up)	10.03.10	25.09.10	29.11.10	21.12.10 (L1)	03.01.11	22	12
4th (from our 3rd breeding)	13.09.12	22.10.12	27.02.13	21.03.13 (L1)	29.04.13	29	–
4th (new sac)	30.04.13	10.06.13	04.08.13	23.08.13 (L2)	08.09.13	33	–