



BRONTY'S FACT SHEET

Billabong Bugs



WHAT ARE BILLABONG BUGS™?

Billabong Bugs™ are actually crustaceans (a relative of crabs, hermit crabs and yabbies) known to scientists as *Triops australiensis*. They have not two, but THREE EYES! In fact, the name "Triops" actually comes from the Greek words meaning "three eyes". If you look closely you will indeed see that your Amazing Billabong Bugs™ have three little eyes.

Billabong Bugs™ are PREHISTORIC creatures, and are sometimes referred to as living Dinosaurs or Dinosaur shrimp. They are closely related to the now extinct Trilobite, an ancient ocean dweller that is often found fossilized. This is another reason that Billabong Bugs™ are sometimes called living fossils or mini dinosaurs. However they actually come from a time that predates the dinosaurs!

Billabong Bugs™ are so old in fact, that when they first appeared on the Earth all the continents that we know today were joined together in one giant land mass known as Pangaea. Over the eons this giant land mass broke apart. As large pieces of Pangaea floated away they formed new continents. One of them was called Gondwanaland, which included Australia, Antarctic, Africa and South America. All of this change caused the temperatures and weather to fluctuate, and some people think that this combined with a devastating comet impact was too much for the Dinosaurs. They had no way to cope and so slowly became extinct.

Why did Billabong Bugs™ outlive the Dinosaurs? Billabong Bugs™ produce a very special egg that can actually journey through time! Months, years and even decades can go by before they need to hatch again. There is a name for this time traveller's trick - it's called "suspended animation". The official name Scientists have given this process is "Cryptobiosis" which is Latin for the words "hidden life". You might be surprised to know that many living things employ this method of time travel. For example, nearly all plants produce seeds and most seeds can be stored for some time before germinating. Amazingly, Billabong Bug™ eggs have been documented to remain asleep for more than 25 years and still hatch out. Scientists think that this is what helped Billabong Bugs™ to survive the extreme temperatures and long droughts that spelt the end for the poor old Dinosaurs. In other words, Billabong Bugs™ slept while the dinosaurs slowly disappeared.

WHAT IS A 'BILLABONG'?

What exactly is a Billabong? A Billabong is a waterhole (some people call them clay pans) that usually dries up outside of the rainy season. If it's a Billabong that does not dry up, you're not likely to find any Billabong Bugs™ in there. This is because there's a very good chance that there will be fish in there instead (or a maybe even a Bunyip!). Billabong Bugs™ make good fishy tucker, so the two are never found together. This is why they usually only occur out in the middle of the outback, where it's very dry and rains only occasionally, and fish are few and far between.

WATCH THEM GROW...

When you add your Magic BugDust™ to the water, the eggs begin to hatch, releasing the developing embryos. The little Billabong Bug™ embryos quickly grow (within several hours) into a "nauplius" larval stage, which is a filter feeding period for your Bugs. This means that they will spend most of their time swimming about in the water. At this stage, the nauplii are also attracted to a bright light, so if you hold the light source next to the container, the nauplii will swim toward the light making them easier to see.

Baby Bugs quickly moult (shed their exoskeleton exposing a larger exoskeleton underneath) through several larval stages, and finally develop into juvenile Bugs, which then migrate to the bottom of the tank. At this stage, the juveniles have the general horse shoe shape that they will retain throughout the rest of their life. The juveniles leave "tracks" in the mud, little lines that are indicative of their "searching" through the soil for things that they can eat. Your Billabong Bugs™ will eventually grow to about five centimetres (but they can get to nine centimetres) and live for approximately 5 to 12 weeks. Size and life span depends on how well they are fed and the temperature of their water.

For more information please give us a call at Brontosaurus on

(02) 6652 4308 and we will assist you with any queries.