



Boa Constrictor

Natural History

Common Name: Boa Constrictor (see below)

Scientific Name: *Boa constrictor*

Lifespan

- Roughly 20 – 30 years (roughly half this time in the wild); captive record ~40 years

Size

- 6 – 8 ft for males; 7 – 10 ft for females, females are typically larger and heavier than males

Distribution

- Central America through the northern half of South America and associated islands. Introduced populations in southern Florida and St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands

Habitat

- Primarily tropical rainforest, some populations arid semidesert

Habits

- Frequently shelters in mammal burrows or in trees
- Harmless, temperament varies greatly from very docile to aggressive
- Primarily nocturnal
- Adults mostly terrestrial, but may spend time in water, juveniles more arboreal

Diet

- Rodents, lizards, birds, and birds' eggs; subdues prey by constriction





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Captive Care

Housing

- 48" X 24" or equivalent area minimum for adults. Young snakes 10 or 20 gallon tank or equivalent area
- Secure, tight-fitting lid or door is necessary
- Substrate can be newspaper, cypress mulch, orchid bark, aspen shavings, reptile carpet, *avoid cedar chips, gravel or sand!*
- Sturdy water dish – water must be available at all times, enough area for soaking if possible
- Two hide boxes (warm side, cool side)

Temperature and Lighting

- Ambient cage temperature 75 F, with "hot area" of 85 to 95 F. Provide heat gradient
- "Hot area" can be achieved by using radiant heat, heat pad on outside of cage, or both
- Lighting not necessary, heat can be achieved by heat pads only
- However, lighting can be dome lamp with incandescent bulbs for heat as well - 12 hr cycle
- UVB lighting beneficial, but not necessary
- Thermometer (temp gun or probe) to measure actual temperature is a necessity
- Adjustable temperature heat pads, thermostat and/or rheostats for any heat source is beneficial

Diet

- Carnivore only, needs whole animal prey
- Frozen/thawed mice, rats, rabbits, chickens, whole prey cased links as alternative*
- Feed once a week especially for juveniles, twice or once a month of a larger prey size for adults is OK, and may even be preferred
- Avoid feeding live prey
- Supplemental vitamins and minerals generally not necessary

Special Notes

- Susceptible to snake mites – difficult to detect and eradicate in some boas
- Prone to infectious stomatitis (mouth rot, nose rub) due to rubbing snout on enclosure and/or lid
- Improper shedding and/or retained eye caps due to low/improper humidity is a common problem
- Widely bred in captivity; many different captive produced color morphs known; mostly we get wild type coloration coming in for adoption rather than morphs
- ~9 or 10 subspecies of boa constrictor recognized, other names include common boa, red-tailed boa, Colombian red-tailed boa, etc. not all are synonyms for the same type of snake

