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## Arabian Sand Boa (*Eryx jayakari*)

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### **Eyes on Top of the Head**

The Arabian sand boa is also known as the Jayakar's sand boa. This is a small species of sand boa, which is among a very fossorial (or burrowing) group of snakes; they will conceal themselves in the substrate with only eyes exposed and ambush rodents, geckos, and other small lizards. The Arabian sand boa is a relatively small, moderately built sand boa with a broad, wedge shaped head, and extremely high set eyes atop its blunt head. Ground color usually consists of a yellowish-gray to light sandy brown to orange with darker brown or black banding and other darker markings present. The Arabian sand boa is also one of the few ovoviviparous species of sand boas, and boas in general, usually laying a small clutch of approximately 2 to 5 eggs.

### **Taxonomy**

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

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Squamata

**Suborder:** Serpentes

**Infraorder:** Alethinophidia

**Family:** Boidae

**Subfamily:** Erycinae

**Genus:** *Eryx*

**Species:** *Eryx jayakari*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, Arabian sand boas can attain longevity of at least 10 to 15 years or more.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The Arabian sand boa is a Middle Eastern species, indigenous to the arid to semi-arid deserts, scrublands, and other sandy soiled areas of Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iran.

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## **Conservation Status**

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

## **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

## **Size**

Arabian sand boas range from 4 to 6 inches as neonates, and seldom more than 15 to 18 inches as adults.

## **Housing and Enclosure**

Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Neonate and juvenile Arabian sand boas can be housed in a 10 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult Arabian sand boas should be housed in a minimum of a 20 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Arabian boas are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that can enable burrowing or hiding such as fine aspen shavings, crushed walnut shells, or play sand mixtures. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide additional basking and hiding opportunities using live or artificial foliage, rocks, logs, driftwood, or other hides. Also be sure to include a sturdy water bowl or dish as well.

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

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized UTH (or tank heating pad), ceramic or radiant heat emitter, or incandescent, UVA/UVB, or other heat producing bulb. Ideal temperatures for Arabian sand boas range from 75 to 82 degrees F on the cool side and 85 to 92 degrees F on the warm side. Most species of snakes have fairly 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 their health, immune system, and overall wellness. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. 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.

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

***Carnivorous;*** In the wild, Arabian sand boas are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, amphibians, smaller reptiles, and other smaller vertebrates. In captivity, Arabian sand boas can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. Newborn, juvenile, and some adult sand boas may require scenting with frogs or lizards, however. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed rodents acquired from a reputable source, as offering live rodents to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the rodent bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder rodent sizes for your snake is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the snake's widest point. It should also be noted that many snakes may refuse food for longer periods of time over several weeks or months, especially in the fall and winter months or if several other husbandry conditions are not being met. While this can be alarming to new pet owners, it is oftentimes normal, but their overall health and weight should be monitored during these times to make sure they do not lose weight or otherwise deteriorate. Most snakes typically are fed whole prey items, and do not usually require additional calcium or vitamin D3 supplementation unless otherwise

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directed. Their feeding frequency will also depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. 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**

As with many snakes, young and juvenile sand boas may initially be more nervous and defensive. Handle your sand boa gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Many sand boas will become more tolerant and accustomed to handling as they become older although some specimens may well remain somewhat nervous or nippy.

**\*\*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 the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

*Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility.*

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