



*Lesley Marshall

Dumeril's Boa (*Boa/Acrantophis dumerili*)

Unique Madagascar Boas

The Dumeril's boa is a medium sized to large, heavy bodied medium sized boa with a ground color is usually light to dark brown, reddish brown, to pinkish with numerous narrow darker saddles and bow tie shaped blotches. Dumeril's boas are primarily a terrestrial boa species as adults, although they can be more semi-arboreal as juveniles, and their intricate colors and patterns enable them to blend in well with the forest floor and leaf litter, which is also known as crypsis or simply camouflage. In many respects, Dumeril's boas are convergent (sharing similar appearances, habits, and lifestyles) to the "Boa constrictors" of Central and South America, and some sources have placed them in the same genus of Boa as well. Dumeril's boas have become a popular "large snake" species in the pet trade, and can make for excellent and docile pets with the right level of knowledge, experience, and foresight without reaching overly large and unmanageable sizes that some other species do.

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: Boinae

Genus: Boa/Acrantophis

Species: *Boa/Acrantophis dumerili**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Dumeril's boas can attain longevity of 25 to 40 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

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Dumeril's boas occur on the island of Madagascar off of Africa in the dry, tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, and savannahs.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Dumeril's boas range from 12 to 18 inches as neonates. Boas are sexually dimorphic, with males averaging 5 to 8 feet, or 54 to 96 inches, and females averaging 7 to 9 feet, or 84 to 108 inches.

Always be sure to consider the potential adult size and long term commitment of keeping and housing a Dumeril's boa or any other large snake prior to obtaining one as part of being a responsible reptile or other pet owner!

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Neonate to juvenile Dumeril's boas can be started out in a 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but will soon require larger accommodations. If glass enclosures are used at any point, be sure that the enclosure retains sufficient humidity. Many of the commercially made plastic or fiberglass enclosures, or otherwise custom-designed enclosures that can retain heat and humidity well are perhaps the best and most practical enclosures to use to house mid to large sized boas and pythons. Depending on the age and size of the animal, a six to eight foot by three foot enclosure or larger is required. Dumeril's boas can be maintained on a substrate of cage liner material, cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, or sphagnum fir mixtures, but always ensure that the substrate does not become too damp or moist. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Dumeril's boas will also require a large sturdy water dish or tub that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed regularly, especially if dirtied. Providing an adequately sized hidebox, artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, logs, and other cage furnishings can also provide additional hiding and basking opportunities.

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 Dumeril's 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, Dumeril's boas are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small mammals, birds, and other reptiles that they can ambush and consume. In captivity, Dumeril's boas can be given feeder rodents or rabbits of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed prey animals

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acquired from a reputable source, as offering live animals to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the prey item bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder prey item 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 these things can be alarming, 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 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 boas are often initially more nervous and defensive. Young boas may gape and hiss, and attempt to bite what they perceive to be a threat or a predator. Handle your boa gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most Dumeril's boas become quite docile and accustomed to handling. Do not place or allow a larger snake around the neck when handling a Dumeril's boa.

****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

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