



*Danny Steele

Green Anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*)

Heaviest Snakes in the World with an Undeserved Reputation

Green anacondas are largely aquatic to semi aquatic ambush predators, using the water to support their weight. They are known as the heaviest species snakes in the world in regards to maximum recorded weights. The largest green anaconda on reliable record weighed nearly 550 lbs.! A heavy bodied snake with an olive to olive brown ground color with two rows of oval shaped dark, alternating dorsal spots or blotches, and yellowish lateral specks bordered in black. There is also a reddish orange post ocular stripe running from behind the eyes and head. Green anacondas and other large constrictor species are a controlled, regulated, or prohibited species in some states. Always check any applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances that may pertain to the specific possession of this species.

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: *Eunectes*

Species: *Eunectes murinus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, green anacondas can attain longevity of 25 to 30 years or more, although up to 40 years is not unheard of.

Distribution and Habitat

The green anaconda is a large, heavy bodied aquatic to semi aquatic boa species indigenous to the swamps, riverways, and flooded wetlands of the Amazon basin in South America (including

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Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay).

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Advanced.

Size

Green anacondas range from 18 to 24 inches as neonates. Adult green anacondas are larger than their smaller cousin the yellow anaconda, and usually range from 9 to 13 feet in males, or 108 to 156 inches, and up typically reaching 15 to 18 feet for females, or 180 to 216 inches. Larger lengths and weights have also been reported in captivity. These snakes are not for beginners, and **always be sure to consider the potential adult size and long term commitment of keeping and housing a green anaconda 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 green anacondas 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 minimum of a six to eight foot by three foot enclosure or larger is required. Green anacondas 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. Being largely semi aquatic, anacondas will also require a large sturdy water dish or tub they can readily enter and exit, and that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed frequently, 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 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 green anacondas 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.

Providing adequate humidity is also important in maintaining anacondas. Green anacondas are less tolerant of and more susceptible to husbandry issues associated with lower humidity levels than yellow anacondas, and require at least 70 to 80% humidity. Using the correct substrate, as well as providing a humid hide box with sphagnum moss will help maintain desired humidity levels. Overall, the enclosure should be maintained at humid levels but not be wet or moist since this leads to other health related implications. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of

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one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Carnivorous; In the wild, green anacondas are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small to large mammals, birds, and other reptiles that they can ambush and consume. In captivity, green anacondas can be given feeder rodents or rabbits of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. Larger feeder or prey items for large snakes such as large rabbits, and even poultry, pigs, and other pre-killed livestock can also often be obtained through alternative means through local wholesalers, meat, or agricultural suppliers in one's area. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed prey animals 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. Green anacondas can also be finicky eaters amongst the large constrictors, especially those of wild caught or questionable origin and history. In these cases, other food items may need to be tried or more secure hiding opportunities provided. 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

Both species of anacondas maintained in captivity (yellow anaconda and the green anaconda) require previous knowledge and experience in handling larger, and/or sometimes aggressive snakes. The origin of the animal chosen (wild caught vs. captive born), as well as the frequency and methods of how they are kept and handled will often determine to a great extent the disposition of anacondas to being handled. Despite their often negative widespread reputation for being nasty or unpredictable, captive bred and born green anacondas that are handled regularly from an early age can become traceable and more easily handled. Anacondas certainly are not for everyone, and are certainly not beginner's snakes (only for experienced and responsible individuals), but with the correct husbandry and handling, can make for a rewarding reptile keeping experience for the right individuals.

****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

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.

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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. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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