



Indian Sand Boa (*Eryx johnii*)

An Oviparous Boa

The Indian sand boa is the largest and heaviest bodied species of sand boa, with cylindrical body with a ground color of dark brown, reddish brown, muddy yellow to bright yellow or orange in the Sunset morph with faint dark bands. The head is also wedge shaped and the tail is very blunt. Sand boas are a small and fossorial (or burrowing) group of snakes that are sedentary ambush predators. They will conceal themselves in the substrate with only eyes exposed and ambush rodents and lizards. The Indian sand boa is also one of two or three oviparous species of boas that are old world that will lay 2 to 4 large eggs. They are a secretive, primarily nocturnal or crepuscular boa species that typically tend to be very docile and inoffensive snakes, seldom, if ever, offering to bite in self-defense. When threatened, these sand boas will most often coil into a loose ball with their heads hidden in the center, and their blunt tails exposed to distract potential predators. Indian sand boas are a small and easily kept species of boa in the herpetocultural hobby and industry, and possess bold and unique patterning and coloration making them attractive choices to maintain overall.

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 johnii**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Indian sand boas can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more. They

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may reach up to even 35 to 40 years.

Distribution and Habitat

Indian sand boas are a large sand boa species native to semi-arid deserts, scrubland, and savannahs of southern to southeastern Asia.

Conservation Status

IUCN Lower Risk/Near Threatened (LR/NT).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Indian sand boas are the largest species of sand boas, with hatchlings and neonates ranging from 5 to 8 inches, and about 2 ½ to 4 feet in length as adults, or about 24 to 48 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Neonate Indian sand boas can be housed in a 10 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult Indian sand boas should be housed in a minimum of a 20 to 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Indian sand 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, orchid bark, 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 Indian 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, Indian sand boas are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, amphibians, smaller reptiles, and other smaller vertebrates. In captivity, Indian 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

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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 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. The Indian sand boa tends to be a large docile species of sand boa, although neonates may be somewhat 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

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