



Kenyan Sand Boa *Gongylophis colubrinus*

- Kenyan sand boas are native to semi arid deserts, scrubland, and savannahs of much of northern Africa.
- Sand boas are a small and fossorial (or burrowing) group of snakes; they will conceal themselves in the substrate with only eyes exposed and ambush rodents and lizards.
- The Kenyan sand boa is a thick, blackish to dark brown snake with large yellow, yellow-orange, to orange blotches. Their heads are short and shovel like and eyes are set high on their head.
- If provided the proper care, Kenyan sand boas can attain longevity of 15-20 years or more.

Size

Ranges from 4-6 inches as neonates, and up to 1 ½-2 feet, or 18- 24 inches as adults.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Neonate sand boas can be housed in a 10-15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults can be comfortably housed in a 20 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Provide loose substrate for burrowing such as aspen or Sani Chip shavings, or play sand. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide a small water bowl or dish and a hide box at all times in the enclosure. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can provide additional security.

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for sand boas (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for these sand boas range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 85-90 degrees F on the warm side.

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 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, sand boas are sedentary ambush hunters of rodents and other small mammals, and occasionally frogs and lizards.

Most neonates can be started off on pinkie mice every 3-5 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult sand boas can be fed adult mice once every 5-7 days. A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

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 will remain 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****