



Long Nosed Snakes *(Rhinocheilus lecontei ssp.)*

Another Under-Rated Tricolor

Long nosed snakes are a relatively small to medium sized species of colubrid snake that specialize on feeding on frogs and small lizards. There are four (4) recognized subspecies: Mexican long nosed snake (*R. l. antonii*), Isla Cerralvo long nosed snake (*R. l. etheridgei*), Western long nosed snake (*R. l. lecontei*), and Texas long nosed snake (*R. l. tessellatus*). Most long nosed snakes are smooth scaled, tri-colored species with red, black, and/or white or cream and superficially resemble kingsnakes or milksnakes (*Lampropeltis spp.*). The distinguishing characteristic of this species, however, are their long, slightly upturned snouts, giving them their common name. Longnose snakes are secretive, crepuscular, and largely fossorial species, using their elongated snouts and powerful bodies to burrow into dark, humid environments under or within rocks, logs, and other vegetation or natural and artificial ground cover and debris. Longnose snakes are typically mild mannered, and seldom bite in defense, but will often secrete foul smelling musk and defecate when initially handled. They also tend to be specialist amphibian and lizard eaters, although they can be switched to more conventional rodent diets, and can make for colorful and intriguing species to maintain in captivity for the intermediate level enthusiast.

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: Colubridae

Subfamily: Colubrinae

Genus: Rhinocheilus

Species: *Rhinocheilus lecontei**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, long nosed snakes can attain longevity of at least 10 to 15 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Long nosed snakes are a species of relatively small to medium sized, smooth scaled and

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primarily terrestrial to semi-arboreal colubrid snakes indigenous to the western to southwestern United States, and into northern Mexico. The more precise ranges and localities is also largely dependent upon the subspecies. Within this range, long nosed snakes occupy primarily terrestrial environments, including semi-dry, to semi-arid grasslands, sub-deserts, rocky hillsides, scrublands and chaparral with sandy to loamy soil, as well as other open, rocky environments. Long nosed snakes are a somewhat secretive group of species, often seeking refuge in burrows, rocks and rock crevices, hollowed logs, and other natural or manmade debris on or near the ground.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Legal and Regulatory Status(*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Long nosed snakes can range from 5 to 10 inches as hatchlings, and 3 to 5 feet, or 36 to 54 inches as most adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Hatchling long nosed snakes can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult long nosed snakes should be housed in a minimum of a 20 to 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Long nosed snakes are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that can enable burrowing or hiding such as cage carpet or cage liner, fine aspen shavings, or coconut fibers. 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 long nosed snakes range from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and 80 to 90 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, long nosed snakes are carnivorous, and will prey upon primarily lizards and amphibians, although rodents and other small mammals, small birds, bird eggs, and other smaller vertebrates may also be eaten. In captivity, long nosed snakes may require scenting, but can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice or feeder house

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geckos or anoles. In most 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 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

Long nosed snakes are typically a docile and mild mannered species, usually not opting to bite in defense, although this species is known for its musking and defecation when handled or harassed. As with any snake species, gentle, careful, and deliberate handling should always be considered when handling your long nosed snakes. These snakes are seldom available as captive bred specimens, and most are still wild caught or collected.

****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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