



Rosy Boa (*Lichanura trivirgata*)

A North American Native Boa

Rosy boas are only one of two species of boa native to North America and the United States. The other species of North American boa is the Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*). Rosy boas are a small, heavy bodied boa with a fairly blunt tail. This species of boa can vary quite considerably in coloration and pattern depending on subspecies and locality, with ground color varying from tan, grayish, to cream colored with reddish, to orangish, reddish-orange, or black longitudinal stripes. 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, rosy 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. As with most North American species, rosy boas require the proper permits or other documentation in states and provinces in which they are indigenous to.

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: *Lichanura*

Species: *Lichanura trivirgata**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, rosy boas can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more, although up to 30 to 40 years is not uncommon.

Distribution and Habitat

Depending on the subspecies and local, rosy boas can be found from the southwestern United States to northern and northwestern Mexico in a variety of habitats including semi-arid deserts,

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grasslands, steppes, savannahs, and open forests and woodlands.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Rosy boas range from 5 to 8 inches as neonates, and 3 to 4 feet, or 36 to 48 inches as most adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Neonate rosy boas can be housed in a 10 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult rosy boas should be housed in a minimum of a 20 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Rosy 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 rosy 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, rosy boas are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, and other smaller vertebrates. In captivity, rosy boas can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. 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

As previously mentioned, rosy boas are quite placid and innocuous snakes, and reluctant to bite under most circumstances. Handle your rosy boa gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Neonates and wild caught rosy boas may be shy and be inclined to curl into a ball in self-defense, but in general, captive bred and born rosy boas will become more tolerant and accustomed to handling as they become older.

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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