



Twin Spotted Ratsnake (*Elaphe bimaculata*)

Old World Corn Snakes

The twin spotted ratsnake is a relatively small to medium sized, old world ratsnake species found primarily in China. Also occasionally known as the Chinese corn snake, the twin spotted ratsnake can be a rather variable species in color and patterning, depending on the individual. They may range in ground color from yellowish, tan, to light brown or olive brown, and may have a series of darker blotches, spotting, and/or stripes present. Blotched specimens are the most commonly seen, with either two rows of dorsal blotches, and/or narrower reddish to reddish brown dorsal bow-tie shaped dorsal blotches as well as an arrowhead pattern on the back of their heads and necks (and dark post ocular stripes) similar to the North American corn snakes. As with many of the Asian Old world ratsnake species, the twin spotted ratsnake is an arboreal to semi arboreal species, often climbing into shrubs, trees, and barns or other outbuildings to seek shelter and smaller prey. This species is uncommonly encountered in herpetoculture, but can do quite well under the correct care.

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: *Elaphe*

Species: *Elaphe bimaculata**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided correct husbandry, this species can be expected to attain typical colubrid longevity of at least 15 to 25 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The twin spotted ratsnake is an old world species, being found in the provenances of provinces of Anhui, Hubei, Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. They can be found in a variety of habitats, from forest edges and woodlands, to agricultural, cultivated, and residential areas within this range.

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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

Twin spotted ratsnakes are a relatively small to medium sized species, ranging from 6 to 12 inches as hatchlings and juveniles, and typically around 2 ½ to 3 ½ feet as adults, or 24 to 36 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Hatchling twin spotted ratsnakes can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult twin spotted ratsnakes should be housed in a minimum of a 20 to 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Twin spotted snakes are semi-arboreal, but 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, cypress mulch, 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 twin spotted ratsnakes range from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and 80 to 88 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, twin spotted ratsnakes are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, bird eggs, and other smaller vertebrates. Hatchlings and juveniles will also occasionally eat smaller frogs, lizards, or other reptiles. In captivity, twin spotted ratsnakes can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice, although they may require scenting with lizards or frogs initially. 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

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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, hatchling and juvenile twin spotted rat snakes may initially be nervous and defensive. These snakes may rattle their tails, musk or defecate, or bite when alarmed. Handle your twin spotted rat snake gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most twin spotted rat snakes 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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