

Red-tailed Boa

Boa constrictor constrictor

Reptile

Scientific Name

Boa constrictor constrictor

Other Names

Colombian Red-tailed Boa

Range

Central and South America

Habitat

Woodlands, semi-arid forests and rainforests

Average Size

Length: 10 ft

Weight: 50 lbs.

Description

Large constrictor with irregular brownish-black oval patches on top and sides of body, and light colored scales underneath. A large, black stripe runs the length of each side of the head, passing through the eyes.

Diet

In the wild: Small rodents, lizards, birds and eggs

In captivity: Two large rats once a month

Lifespan

In the wild: Estimated at 15 years

In captivity: Up to 25 years

Incubation

Viviparous

Sexual Maturity

In the wild: Estimated at 3 years

In captivity: 3 years

Clutch Size

15 – 40 offspring

Predators

Large cats, crocodilians and humans

Population Status

Endangered



Behavior

These large snakes are crepuscular or nocturnal, spending the daylight hours hiding in rocky crevices or among tree roots. They are moderate climbers, but due to their size are unable to move in the thin branches near the tops of the trees. Red-tailed Boas are also adept swimmers and can be found underwater in the heat of the day. Rather than always actively hunting for their food, these boas often camouflage at the edge of a game trail and wait for animals to happen by. They have heat sensing nerves on their lips to help them locate prey. Red-tailed Boas have also been seen crawling into a mammal burrow and waiting by the entrance for three to four days for prey to come in. They strike their prey then encircle it with two to three body coils until it suffocates. Like all snakes, they swallow their meal whole and depending upon the size of the meal, may eat as infrequently as once a month.

Reproduction and Breeding

Red-tailed Boas are solitary unless they are mating, which can take place at any time throughout the year. They are live bearers with the adults offering no protection to the offspring after they are born. The foot-long youngsters must use instinct to protect themselves from predators.

Conservation

This species is listed as endangered and is illegal in the pet and animal products trade. Many are illegally hunted for food and skins each year, with many more being captured for use in the pet trade in the United States despite their ability to breed readily in captivity. Although they are adaptable to a range of habitats, the loss of rainforest and pristine temperate forests in South and Central America continues to put pressure on their survival in the wild.



The Sacramento Zoological Society
3930 West Land Park Dr., Sacramento, CA 95822
T: 916-808-5888 F: 916-264-7385 E: info@saczoology.org

saczoology.org

Amazing Facts

Snakes do not have eyelids, so they can never blink. They have a scale that covers their eyes for protection!

All boas of the world give live birth!

Contrary to popular belief, snakes do not unhinge their jaws to eat. Their jaws have special hinges on the side and a stretchy ligament in the front of the lower jaw so large prey can be swallowed whole!

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