

Kenyan Sand Boa

The Kenyan Sand Boa has a dedicated and growing following due to its manageable size, passive personality and simple captive care requirements. Kenyan Sand Boas are heavy built snakes with a thick, short body, blunt head with small eyes. Both the eyes and nostrils are placed high on the head so that they remain uncovered when the sand boa's body is hidden below the sand. Their tail is quite short, tapers very quickly and it also can't be coiled. The back is orange or yellow in color covered with dark brown splotches, while the belly has white or cream coloration though more recently both commercial and hobby breeders made available a number of new morphs, including albino, anerythristic, snow or stripes just to name a few.

- **Common Name:** Kenyan, Egyptian, East African Sand Boa or simply just Sand Boa.
- **Scientific Name:** *Gongylophis colubrinus*
- **Distribution:** Egypt south throughout Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea into Somalia, Kenya, and Northeastern Tanzania. The species may also be found more to the west in countries such as Libya, Chad or Niger or maybe further east into Yemen.
- **Size:** Females reach a little more than 2 feet in length. Males tend to be smaller than females, rarely exceeding 20 inches in length.
- **Life Span:** 15 to 30+ years

Habitat

The Kenyan sand boa is appealing to many keepers because of its minimal space requirements. Even the largest female Kenyan sand boa can be comfortably housed in a 10-gallon terrarium with a secure lid, or a similarly sized enclosure (12"x20").

Male Kenyan Sand Boas should not be housed together. Furthermore we don't recommend housing any snakes together at all.

Given the Kenyan sand boa's propensity for burrowing, cage accessories should be minimal. Heavy rocks should be avoided, If your Sand Boa burrows beneath heavy rocks and causes a mini-avalanche, the result could be injury or even death to the snake. Despite its small size, these snakes can be very destructive to your cage's interior design, so décor does not need to be excessive.

Decorative branches can be a nice touch, but they are not necessary. I have never seen a Kenyan sand Boa even attempt to climb. Kenyan sand boas are terrestrial creatures that prefer to spend most of their time underground.

Heating

- Daytime Terrarium Temperature: 80-95°F Gradient
- Basking Temperature: 95°F
- Nighttime Terrarium Temperature: 75°F- 85°F

We advise using a UTH (undertank heating) pad under one side of the Tank, left on 24/7, along with an incandescent overhead lamp during the day, to create a thermal gradient in your snake enclosure. The basking area under the light should be approximately 95 degrees Fahrenheit and the cooler side of the enclosure should be around 80 degrees. A drop to the mid-70s at night is acceptable.

A thermometer will help you keep a close eye on terrarium temperatures.

Lighting

Most snakes typically do not require UVB to meet their vitamin D requirements. However, many snakes receive UVB and sunlight in their natural habitat and there is new scientific evidence that they do benefit from UVB lighting in captivity.

5.0 and 10.0 fluorescent lamps can be use to illuminate your

terrarium and create a photoperiod (light cycle) that will keep your snake on natural day/night cycles.

Kenyan Sand Boas spend almost all their time underground so, in this case, any light beyond the heat light would be mainly just for you to see inside your cage better, strictly aesthetic.

Substrates

Many people naturally assume the only choice of substrate for the Kenyan Sand Boa is sand. The truth is they can be kept on a variety of substrates, including aspen bedding, coconut mulch, play sand, and even newspaper. We use and recommend the snake aspen because it holds the snake's burrows very well and will not collapse as they burrow through. We do recommend staying away from gravel, corncob bedding and, for all animals we carry, cedar shavings.

Nutrition

These small non-venomous snakes are carnivorous, generally feeding on small mammals, but may eat other animals such as birds or small lizards. The Kenyan Sand Boa is normally an ambush predator spending most of their time in shallow burrows in the sand, leaving only their head exposed. When a prey comes within the striking range they quickly strike and seize the animal killing it by constriction, much like their bigger cousins such as the Boa constrictor. They sometimes drag their prey under the sand to kill it, and on occasion, these snakes may even eat their prey while still alive.

In captivity your sand boa is going to strictly be fed mice. Baby sand boas typically prefer live pinky mice. Adult male sand boas will accept a large hopper mouse, and an adult female sand boa can handle a jumbo-sized mouse. Males tend to eat less frequently than females, although there are always exceptions. Food items should be no wider than the girth of your snake (fattest part of its body).

We recommend you offer food to female sand boas every week and to the males every 10 to 14 days. Kenyan sand boas that are shedding will often strike and constrict their meal, but then abandon it. We do not offer food to any of our snakes during their shed cycle.

Have fresh water available at all times. Water Conditioners are a good choice for removing Chlorine and Chloramines from tap water or bottled drinking water or RO/DI filtered water will do as well.

A sturdy ceramic bowl is a good choice as a water dish for a sand boa. A light plastic water dish will be easily pushed over, possibly fouling the environment. The only time the cage should have high humidity is during the Kenyan sand boa's shed cycle. High humidity is important during the shed cycle to ensure all of the skin comes off safely. A humid hide box is rarely utilized, so we prefer to use a good old-fashioned spray bottle.

Tips

- Most of the sand boas we have worked with have been even-tempered. A few sand boa specimens we have encountered were feistier than normal, though they tried to squirm away rather than actually bite. Not being mindful of the speedy feeding response is one way to land an accidental bite. They should be picked up from the middle of their body, giving them a chance to realize that it's not dinnertime. If you approach a sand boa from above, near the front third of its body, it may assume you are food and strike at you. A bite from a sand boa is no more severe than a scratch from a housecat, to put it into perspective, but it can still be painful for you and traumatic for the snake, and for these reasons a bite should be avoided.

This is only a basic care sheet,

Please continue to educate yourself on your new family member.