

EMERALD TREE BOA

SQUAMATA

Family: Boidae Genus: Corallus Species: caninus



Range: Tropical rain forests of South America Habitat: wet, lowland areas of rain forest Niche: arboreal, carnivorous, nocturnal

Wild diet: small mammals, occasional birds, lizards and frogs

Zoo diet: mice and rats **Life Span:** 20 - 30 years

Sexual dimorphism: females generally being larger in both length and girth than males, males

have larger spurs

Location in SF Zoo: South American Tropical Rainforest and Aviary

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Emerald Tree Boas are non-venomous, arboreal constrictors. These nocturnal snakes are brightly colored; individuals vary greatly in body and pattern color and pattern. Typically, they are emerald green with a white irregular interrupted zigzag stripe or so-called 'lightning bolts' down the back and a yellow belly. Their body is laterally compressed. Their strong prehensile tail helps them anchor to branches on which they coil and move around.

Head is large with two fairly large bulges on either side. Pupils are thin and vertical and detect

movement. They have many thermal receptor pits in the scales around their mouth that are used to detect the heat of prey they are tracking, especially at night. Their front teeth are proportionately larger than those of any other non-venomous snake. This species has an extremely slow metabolism and feeds less often than ground dwelling species; meals may be several months apart.

Weight:

Length: 5 – 6.5 ft

Width: < 2 in diameter

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Emerald tree boas experience ontogenetic color change, going from red, orange and yellow neonates to green adults after 9–12 months of age.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Least concern. Not listed by IUCN and CITES does not list it as a species of concern. Emerald tree boas have become increasingly desirable in captivity in recent years.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Emerald Tree Boas will extend their head downward to wait patiently for something to eat and then ambush from above. They have difficulty ingesting food unless they hang downward from a branch while swallowing. They are agile climbers and can scale vertical bamboo poles.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Little is known about their mating behaviors in the wild. They are ovoviviparous and give birth to live young. Females usually breed every other year; females invest heavily in young through gestation, but do not provide care after birth.

Incubation: 6 – 7 mos # of young: 5 - 12

Sexual Maturity: 3 – 4 yrs Weight at birth: 3.7 – 1.8 lbs Length at birth: 15.8 – 19.7 in

MISCELLANEOUS

The genus name *Corallus - meaning 'of coral' or 'coral-like' -* was used by Linnaeus to describe the coral-like color and pattern of snakes. *Caninus - meaning 'canine-like' or resembling a canine or dog'* - came about from the shape and form of the snake's head. *Corallus caninus* may help control small mammal populations, especially rodents. All members of the Genus *Corallus* possess thermoreceptive labial pits that aid in locating and securing prey.

Sources: updated: 3/2015

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