

Common Name: Kenyan Sand Boa

Scientific Name: *Eryx colubrinus*



IUCN Red list Status: Not listed
AZA Conservation Program: None

Class: Reptilia
Order: Squamata
Family: Boidae
Genus: Eryx

Habitat/Range: This snake species is found in semi-arid desert regions, scrub savannahs, and rock outcroppings of East Africa; Egypt south to Tanzania; southwest Somalia west to Kenya.

Threats in the Wild: Birds, mammals, larger snakes.

Physical Characteristics: The Kenyan sand boa is a heavy-looking reptile with a blunt head, small eyes, and a thick, short body. Their bellies are white or cream colored and their back has orange or yellow coloration with dark brown splotches. The tail is very short and tapers quickly to a dull point and can't be coiled. Eyes and nostrils are placed on the head so that they remain free of debris when the snake's body is hidden below the sand. Females are generally larger than males, weighing up to 2 pounds. Female length: 26-32 inches; Male length: 15 inches

Reproduction: Kenyan sand boas reach sexual maturity at 2-3 years of age. These snakes are ovoviviparous (young develop inside egg sacs incubated inside the female's body). The young hatches live after a gestation period of 4 months inside the female's body. There are typically 5-12 offspring. They do not receive nourishment from the mother while developing inside her.

Longevity: 15-20 years

Diet: In the wild they eat rodents (naked mole rats, for example), lizards, and nestlings. At the zoo they eat mice.



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Miscellaneous: The Kenyan sand boa spends most of its life buried in the sand, quite invisible. It also lives hidden under stones and in the burrows of other animals. It avoids the midday heat, only emerging early in the morning and in the evening to search for food. It seizes its prey and suffocates it between the coils of its body, only relaxing its embrace when the animal stops breathing. It then swallows its victim whole, without chewing, in the same way as other snakes. If there is any danger, it buries itself quickly and carefully in soft ground, usually sand. This snake is typically very docile and rarely strikes or bites.

Docent Animal Specifics: Our current Sand Boa, Naya, was born in 2000.



Fact Sheet – Reptilia – Kenyan Sand Boa
Last Updated: April 2020

