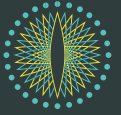


Central American Boa

All Reptiles, all the time.



Introduction

The Central American Boa (*Boa imperator*) and the Common Colombian Boa (*Boa imperator*) are both subspecies of the same species but exhibit key differences in size, appearance, and temperament due to their geographic distribution. Central Americans are a smaller subspecies but also more defensive. These snakes make excellent pets for reptile keepers that want a boa constrictor but do not have the space to house a Common Colombian Boa and are willing to take the time to handle them to tame down the defensive behaviour.

Care sheets are only to be taken as guidelines. Just as with all animals, each reptile will have unique traits & personalities special to the individual animal that may require adaptation in their husbandry & care. The following care sheet will address basic requirements but as the primary caretaker of your pet, we encourage you to take notice of your pet's behaviours and preferences and make adjustments as they grow with you & your family. Please also keep in mind that unlike mammals, most reptiles change their behaviour according to seasonal weather changes even if you keep them indoors all year round. Most reptiles also change their behaviour according to their life stages and should not be expected to behave the same their whole life.



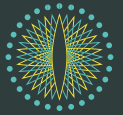
CHEAT SHEET

Central American Boa

COMMON NAME	Central American Boa
SCIENTIFIC NAME	<i>Boa imperator</i>
NATURAL LOCATION	Central and South America
HABITAT (WILD)	Tropical Forest, Scrublands, Coastal
CAPTIVE ENCLOSURE	15-30gal for hatchlings/juveniles, 40gal+ for adults
SUBSTRATE	Cypress Mulch, Loose Bark, Coco Husk, Soil Blends
TEMPERATURE TOLERANCE	Nighttime: 70-72°F (21-23°C), Cooler: 74-80°F (23-27°C)
BASKING TEMPERATURE	85-92°F (30-33°C)
UVB LIGHTING	Optional. Can be beneficial in moderate amounts.
HUMIDITY	Approx. 40%-60%
AVERAGE ADULT SIZE	4-6 feet
CAPTIVE LIFESPAN	25-30 years
FUN FACT	Belong to the same subspecies as Common Colombians - appear distinct.

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Housing

Enclosure: A suitable enclosure for a Central American Boa should provide ample space for movement and thermo-regulation. Juveniles can be kept in a 15-30gallon terrarium, but adults require a minimum of 40gal and possibly larger if you happen to have one that grew larger than most. These boas are semi arboreal and will climb if you provide vertical space. Secure, well-ventilated enclosures made of PVC, wood, or glass are recommended to maintain proper temperature and humidity levels.

Substrate: Choose a substrate that retains moisture without being overly damp, such as cypress mulch, coconut husk, reptile bark bedding, or soil blends. You can also use aspen shavings if you are able to provide adequate air humidity. Avoid substrates that may cause infections in the eyes, mouth, and vents such as coco fibre or sands.

Heating: Maintain a thermal gradient within the enclosure, with a warm side temperature of 85-92°F (30-33°C) and a cool side temperature of 74-80°F (23-27°C). Use dark heat lamps, heat pads, ceramic heat emitters, or radiant heat to achieve and maintain these temperatures. We recommend heat pads for smaller enclosures and radiant heat or heat lamps for larger enclosures. Using heat lamps can cause the enclosure to dehydrate so it is very important to maintain proper humidity and moisture in the enclosure while also providing good air flow.

Hide spots: Central American Boas will spend a lot of time out in the open but providing hide spots is still very important as Central Americans are shyer than the Common Colombians. For smaller enclosures, one hide spot on the warm end is often enough but if you have the room, then provide one on the cool end as well. As your boa grows larger, it is more beneficial to provide more natural looking hide spots such as cork on the ground and foliage canopy up high.

Humidity: Central American Boas can handle some fluctuation in humidity but they do prefer a consistent moderate to high humidity environment. Maintain humidity levels between 40-60% for most of the enclosure if you can. Mist the enclosure as needed and provide a humidity hide filled with damp sphagnum moss to aid in shedding if you are having trouble maintaining humidity in the enclosure as a whole.



Diet

Feeding: Offer appropriately sized prey items every 7-10 days for juveniles, every 7-14 days for sub-adults, and every 14-21 days for full size adults with prey items matching the girth of the snake's thickest part. Juveniles are typically fed hopper mice and adult mice. We advise against the feeding of rat pinkies and rat fuzzies to hatchling boas as we find that the fat content in rats is difficult for juvenile boas to digest and will often regurgitate it if they can not process it. Rats are ideal prey when they are 6 months old and above and they can remain on rats for their entire adult lives. Many keepers also choose to feed frozen thawed chicks or quails as they do eat a lot of small birds in the wild. There is strong debate over feeding live versus frozen thawed and there are pros and cons to both. Nutritionally, one is not better than the other assuming you have acquired your feed from a healthy source. Never leave a live rodent unsupervised with your snake and never leave an uneaten frozen/thawed rodent to decompose overnight. To read more about feeding live versus frozen/thawed, please refer to Karen's Corner.

Water: Provide a water dish filled with fresh, clean water at all times. Ensure the water dish is large enough for your ball python to soak in if desired.



Health & Maintenance

Hygiene: Your Central American Boa will only relieve itself once every 7-10 days on average when they are young and every 14-21 days when they are older. Over time, you will learn your snake's bathroom routines. Look out for it regularly and remove all excrements as soon as you see it to prevent the buildup of bacteria and parasites. Remove excrements, shed skin, and uneaten prey items promptly. You may notice small chunks of a white chalky substance, this excrement substance is called urates and should be removed promptly as well. We recommend a full substrate change once per season, 4 times a year. Wood and plant décor can be washed monthly with hot water and dish soap and put back into place.

Handling: Central American Boas tend to be more defensive as juveniles, often displaying hissing, striking, or tail wagging when disturbed. However, with gentle and consistent handling, most individuals calm down over time. It is important to let the snake acclimate to its enclosure before initiating handling sessions. When handling, approach slowly, avoiding sudden movements that may startle the snake. Always support the snake's body fully and allow it to move freely without restraint. Regular, brief handling sessions will help build trust, but avoid handling immediately after feeding to prevent regurgitation. Larger individuals require firm but careful handling due to their strength.

Behavioral Observation: These boas are primarily nocturnal and crepuscular, meaning they are most active during the evening and early morning hours. Unlike their Colombian relatives, some Central American Boas tend to be more reclusive, preferring to remain hidden during daylight. Signs of stress or discomfort include excessive hiding, defensive posturing, and rapid breathing, while signs of illness include wheezing, lethargy, mouth gaping, or excessive soaking. A relaxed and curious boa may explore its enclosure, climb on branches, or exhibit slow, deliberate movements. Regular observation allows keepers to detect health issues early and develop a deeper understanding of their snake's behavior.

Quarantine: Quarantine any new additions to your reptile collection to prevent the spread of diseases.