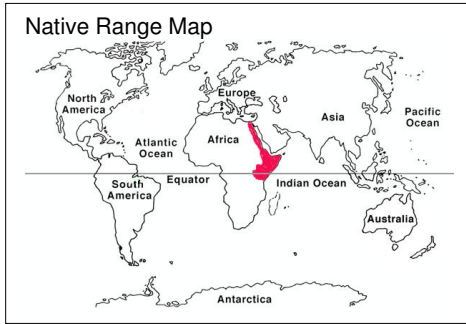


Kenyan Sand Boa



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Serpentes
Family: Boidae
Genus: *Eryx*
Species: *colubrinus loveridgei*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** 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.
- **Exhibit Location:** Zoo to You Collection; also off exhibit behind naked mole rat

Characteristics

- The Kenyan sand boa is a heavy-looking reptile with a blunt head, small eyes, and a thick, short body. Its belly is white or cream colored and its 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
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** well into their teens; **In Captivity** more than 15 years

Behaviors

- 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.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** different scents

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 hatch 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.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** rodents (naked mole rats, for example), lizards, nestlings
- **At the Zoo:** mice

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES Appendix:** not listed. They are commonly found in the region of their natural habitat.
- In the 1970s, a very few specimens were imported from Kenya. At that time, this species was seldom seen in captivity. The Houston Zoo reported the first captive-breeding success. In the late 1980s until 1995, numerous specimens were exported from northern Tanzania to the United States. In 1995,

Tanzania stopped the export of sand boas and since that time, wild-caught specimens are no longer available.

- Predators: desert monitor

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- These sand boas are the most popular of the sand boas in United States' collections.

Sources:

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- Western New York Herpetological Society, (2002). Western new york herpetological society. Retrieved Aug. 09, 2004, from Western New York Herpetological Society Web site: <http://www.wnyherp.org/care-sheets/snakes/kenyan-sand-boa.php>.