

Common Name: Common boa constrictor	Scientific Name: <i>Boa constrictor</i>
Class: Reptilia Order: Squamata Family: Boidae	Feeding Type: Carnivore Statistics: Length: 3-20 ft Weight: 30-60lbs

DESCRIPTION: The boa constrictor has cryptic coloration throughout its entire body. The coloration depicts debris on the forest floor by using patterns of cream, black, brown, and reddish brown markings. The coloration on the dorsal side of the boa constrictor is much darker than the coloration on the ventral side, which is predominantly cream colored with dark speckles.

RANGE: Central America to southern South America

HABITAT: Forested areas

ADAPTATIONS: The cryptic coloration of the boa camouflages it very well on the forest floor, where it will lie and wait for a prey item. Since it is not venomous, the boa strikes out at prey to grab it for constriction, then it quickly wraps its body around it to suffocate it. Every time the prey releases a breath, the boa will squeeze tighter until its sensitive belly scales, or scoots, detect no more movement from the prey. The boa has about 98 tiny, sharp teeth that are pointed in, which worsen the bite when the prey struggles.

Snakes have several senses developed differently from those of many other animals. First, snakes do not have ear holes to detect sound, but rather pick up ground vibrations through the jawbone. Studies have shown that snakes can also detect low-frequency airborne sounds. Snakes also have specialized nerves scattered throughout the body that can detect heat gradients. It is thought that these nerves are used to detect air temperature when thermoregulating the body. Last, instead of smelling the air like many animals, snakes taste the air with the help of the Jacobson's organ found in the roof of the mouth. The tongue catches airborne particles, which are then transferred to the Jacobson's organ to be deciphered.

REPRODUCTION/GROWTH: Boas become sexually mature at two to three years old. A female boa may have 20 to 60 young at one time. Boas carry the eggs inside the body, but give live birth. During birth, the leathery eggshells are expelled, along with the live hatchling boas, or neonates. Neonates will be between 14 and 22 inches long at birth, and will eat shortly after the first shed, which occurs about one week after birth.

Male and female snakes can be distinguished by tail thickness and length. Males have thicker, longer tails than do females.

LONGEVITY: Boas commonly reach six to ten years in the wild, and around 20 years in captivity, but the Philadelphia Zoo has recorded a boa living over 40 years.

PREY/PREDATOR: Prey to birds as young and humans throughout life
Note: When threatened, boa constrictors will hiss so loudly that they can be heard 100 feet away!

Predator to small to medium sized mammals and birds

DIET: WILD: Any animal it can swallow
SZ: Rats

STATUS: All boas are considered threatened by Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Animals, CITES. Even though this protects the transport of all boas, habitat loss and hunting for skin still threatens them.

SPECIAL NOTES: See adaptations.



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