EGGS OF THE CALABAR GROUND PYTHON *CALABARIA REINHARDTII*.

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INTRODUCTION

Calabaria reinhardtii is a rarely imported species of python from West Africa (Liberia east to the Congo). Little is known about the habits of this curious snake.
Recently my female *Calabaria reinhardtii* laid eggs, and though the eggs deteriorated quickly I think it useful to mention the event.

PURCHASE OF THE SNAKES

On the 9th of May 1981 I bought a male *Calabaria reinhardtii*. He weighed 250 g and was about 70 cm long. On the 29th of May I obtained a female specimen. She weighed 340 g and was about 85 cm long. The dark brown ground colour with yellow-white spots indicates that the snake came from the northern part of their distribution; southern specimens have a black ground colour with red spots.

PREGNANCY

Copulation was not observed. At the beginning of July 1981 the female snake ate for the last time; a month later she began to grow in circumference.

As the female snake was becoming restless at this time she was separated into a small terrarium measuring 40x30x35 cm. On the bottom of this terrarium I put some sphagnum, to serve as breeding matter, and to hold the relative air humidity level. The heating (a heating cable matched with a thermostate) maintained a temperature of 26-28°C (day and night).

THE EGGS

On the 15th of September 1981, about 19.00 pm, the female laid two large oblong eggs. The measurements were: for the largest egg, 122 mm long and a diameter of 34 mm, and for the smallest egg, 110 mm long and a diameter of 28 mm.
The eggs weighed 65 and 38 g. As the female snake gave no sign of parental care the eggs were placed in an incubator.
This was a plastic aquarium filled with water to a depth of about 8 cm. On the bottom of the aquarium a smaller plastic case was placed, in which the eggs were laid with a layer of sphagnum. The temperature, between 29-31°C, was regulated by two spiral heaters (10 and 25 Watt), connected to a bimetal thermostate.
Initially the eggs were white. A day later the smaller egg began to turn brown yellow and to shrivel. I opened it, and found a hard cheeselike substance. This egg was probably infertile. The second egg after a week showed signs of deterioration. It began to shrivel and smell of decomposition. I left the egg for a few days longer, but its state began to worsen, so it was opened. It contained an evil-smelling yellow porridge, with slimy bloodclots which I believe to be the remains of a decomposed embryo.

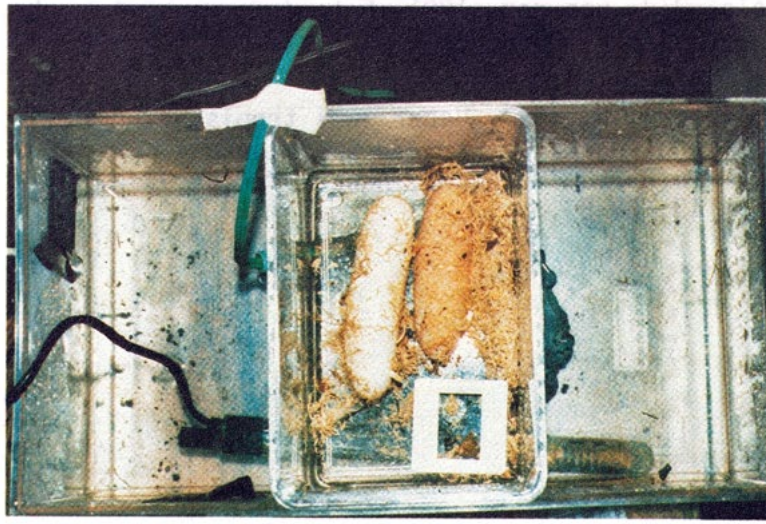


Fig. 1. Eieren van / Eggs of *Calabaria reinhardtii*. Foto: A.B. van Woerkom.

DISCUSSION

The cause of the mortification of the largest egg is I believe the result of too high an incubation temperature and maybe too little humidity. I took a chance on the incubation temperature as that that meets the needs of most python eggs.

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