REPRODUCTION OF *BOA CONSTRICTOR ORTONII* (COPE) IN CAPTIVITY.

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INTRODUCTION

Since 3 September 1981 I have kept a pair of *Boa constrictor ortonii*. After treatment with Ripercol and Neguvon for worms and ectoparasites respectively, a period of three months of quarantine followed. In early December the animals were placed in the same terrarium.

THE TERRARIUM

The terrarium is built mainly of wood, and measures 100x50x70 cm (lxwxh). The front of the terrarium consists of two moveable panes of glass. The bottom is smooth cement, the top gauze. The terrarium is placed under a slanting attic-window. This window, being much larger than the terrarium itself, exposes the latter to a partly (Dutch) diurnal light-cycle; beside this a time-clock for light and warmth is used. The adjusted light-periods are: in summer from 06.30 to 18.00 hrs, and in winter from 09.00 to 16.00 hrs.
The terrarium is fitted with some shelves, which are adjusted close above eachother, and a large branch to climb on. Above the uppermost shelf a carbon-filamented bulb produces a local temperature of 32°C. The bottom is covered with newspaper. A moveable plastic tank (35x25x15 cm) on the

bottom of the terrarium serves as a drinking bowl.

THE ANIMALS

The specimens that I have were chosen primarily for their colour and markings, rather than for their presumable sexual maturity. Both animals are very dark (the male is almost black) and beautifully marked. The female measured a good one meter in length and weighed 1.8 kg. The male was smaller, measuring about 80 cm in length and weighing 1 kg. The female very quickly started to eat well and continued to do so. The male, on the contrary, eats irregularly, even today. They are fed mainly on dead rats and mice, once and a while alternated with day-old chicks.
The female eats at day and at night. In June 1982, the female weighed 2 kg, the male 1.5 kg.

MATING AND PREGNANCY

The male accepted food for the last time on 20 July 1982. The first copulation was observed on 28 July, and the last on 20 September. Mating took place during the day and the night. The male started to eat again on 22 September. The female continued to eat till 27 November. She molted on 22 October, and weighed 2.3 kg. From that date she spent many hours every day, often from 09.00 to 17.00 hrs, lying on the highest shelf. At night she moved to the shelf below.
Gradually she increased in size. During her pregnancy I did not add extra vitamins to the drinking water nor give her anything special. A few days before giving birth, she stopped moving to the highest shelf and stayed on the one below, almost fixed between them.



Fig. 1. *Boa constrictor ortonii*. Foto: P.B. Stoel.



Fig. 2. *Boa constrictor ortonii* in copula. Foto: P.B. Stoel.

DELIVERY

On 26 February 1983, about 20.00 hrs, she gave birth to 18 young. One of the young died shortly after getting out of the eggmembrane. The average length of the young was 40 cm, the average weight 40 g. All the young were alike, in contrast to adult *Boa constrictor ortonii* which can be very variable in colour and markings. The female weighed 1.4 kg immediately after the delivery. One of the young showed a strange behaviour just after getting out of the eggmembrane: it yawned often and prolonged. Fortunately this behaviour stopped 15 minutes later. After all the young had "hatched", they were placed in a terrarium the same size as the adults, there being no alternative. This terrarium had no branches or shelves. To provide the young with hiding places, the terrarium was partly filled with stuffed newspaper. This was sprinkled with luke-warm water which created a high relative humidity. The temperature was a constant 27°C. Despite expectations, the young boas did not use the many hiding places but crawled together in one heap. After several days I was able to split the young into small groups, providing each group with its own terrarium. No food was offered until after the first molt, which took place between 5 and 7 March. On 12 March 1983 all the young had eaten by themselves. While transferring the young from the parental terrarium, the female reacted with fierce attacks towards me. The male did not show the slightest interest and stayed calm on its shelf. The female ate three adolescent rats the same evening. Although she was still alert after this big meal, I did not offer any more. After her next molt she weighed 1.5 kg.

NOTE

I bought the parental snakes, which were caught in

the wild, allready sexually mature. I seldom took them out of the terrarium, once they were put in their definite "home", even when cleaning the terrarium disturbing the animals as little as possible. Consequently they stayed more or less "wild". I think this produced the relative short period between buying and reproduction. Likewise, the fact that the animals have never been ill may have helped.