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## MAINTAINING *LICHANURA* IN CAPTIVITY

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*Lichanura* is a genus of small boids (up to 1m) found in the Southwestern United States and in the Mexican states of Sonora and Baja California (Norte and Sur).

Currently three subspecies are recognized: *Lichanura trivirgata roseofusca*, found along the coastal regions of southern California and Baja California Norte; *Lichanura trivirgata gracia*, found in desert regions of Southern California and Arizona; and *Lichanura trivirgata trivirgata*, found in Sonora, Baja California and extreme southern Arizona. In addition *Lichanura* is found on some of the islands in the Gulf of California.

*Lichanura* prefers a rocky habitat, especially boulder covered hillsides with a southerly exposure. The Coastal Rosy, *roseofusca*, is essentially diurnal becoming nocturnal as daytime temperatures rise above 30°C. *Gracia* and *trivirgata* are basically nocturnal except in early spring, March and April, when they may be found in the daytime.

All three subspecies have the same basic requirements in captivity. *Lichanura* require little space. I house individual specimens in cages measuring 60x30x30 cm. For a substrate, I use clean pine shavings. A hide box and a bowl of clean water complete the interior of the cage. Rosy boas feed on warm-blooded prey and kill by

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constriction. Adults are fed one medium sized mouse weekly, while juveniles are fed 2-3 baby mice weekly. Adults will accept dead mice readily.

In order to induce breeding in *Lichanura* it is necessary to cool the adults over the winter. From 1 November to 1 March, I keep the adults at an average temperature of 16-18°C. On 1 March I raise the daytime temperature to 26-28°C, dropping it at night to 19-20°C.

In early April, I introduce the adults to each other. If I do not notice any breeding activity within one or two days, I separate them, reintroducing them a day later.

When the adults are together during the breeding season I maintain the cage temperature at 26-28°C around the clock. If mating is successful the female soon stops feeding (rarely they will continue to feed until birth) but starts to gain weight. It is important to keep the gravid females warm (24-28°C) especially in the later stages of pregnancy, in order to keep the females from aborting the young prematurely.

If all goes well, 3 to 6 young are born live in October or November. Most young will feed readily after their first shed, but some will refuse food until the following spring.

It is important to feed the female rosy after birth in order to build up her weight and strength over the winter, even if it means not hibernating her until December or January.

Occasionally rosy's will refuse to eat. Most of the time they can be induced to eat by placing newborn mice in their hidebox and by maintaining a warm temperature 25-28°C in their cage. Rosy boas are also extremely susceptible to mites

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and their cages should be checked periodically for this pest.

If maintained properly Rosy's make exceptional pets. Currently I have two specimens which I have had for over 10 years.