

THE KEEPING AND BREEDING OF *CORALLUS ENYDRIS ENYDRIS*

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HOUSING

The terrarium (completely glass) measures 75x60x60 cm (lxwxh). The furnishings are kept rather plain for hygienic purposes. For climbing, the snakes have a sort of little step-ladder, made of wooden dowel with a diameter of about 3 cm. Because this stands loose in the terrarium, it is easy to remove during cleaning. On the bottom I use wood shavings and that works well. Faeces are easy to remove and once a month I renew all the wood shavings. I use a 40 Watt spotlight. Some plastic plants serve as a hiding place for the animals. They also hold the water a bit longer after spraying and give the terrarium more colour. The relative humidity is not kept that high - I only spray when the animals are about to slough. This system has given absolutely no problems so far.

THE ANIMALS

All three parental animals were captive born and were bought as young animals. They are now six years old. The male is yellow with a few darker markings on his back. One female is dark orange/red with rather many markings on her back and head; the other female is coloured dark yellow. The animals are housed together throughout the whole year and this has given no problems so far. During feeding it is essential to watch carefully because they are quite aggressive feeders and not only want to grab the prey but also each other.

FOOD

Mice, small rats and chickens are offered to the animals. When the prey animals are in good health it is not necessary, in my opinion to add vitamin preparations. The prey are offered about once every three weeks. This is amply sufficient to keep the animals in good health and in this way they also stay rather active (searching for prey). When fed more often, or with relatively large prey, an animal may regurgitate its meal after a few days. This has nothing to do with a flagellate infection, etc.

BREEDING

As mentioned before, the animals stay together for the whole year. In my experience, keeping them separate except during the reproductive period, is not really necessary. This, of course, does not mean that this method has not been successful in some cases for other breeders.

I try to keep daytime temperatures moderately constant throughout the year (for example, by changing the bulb). The only stimulation to encourage the snakes to copulate is that I let the night temperature drop in the winter, sometimes as low as 15°C. During the day it is then about 28°C in the upper part of the terrarium. As soon as the night temperature rises slightly again, the male begins to copulate. In this period he also refuses to eat. This is in contrast to both the females. When the copulations are successful, you can often tell fairly soon if a female is pregnant - judging from my animals, they refuse to eat or, at any rate, start eating irregularly. Only after a few months can you tell more definitely if there is a pregnancy because the belly of the female begins to show a distinct thickening and the white skin becomes visible between the scales. It is important that the animals have a good place where they can bask under a lamp, especially during the pregnancy. This is also something which the animals often and eagerly make use of after they have eaten.



Foto 1: *Corallus enydris enydris*, juvenile.
Foto: A. Abuys.

THE YOUNG

Immediately after their birth, tree boas are already aggressive and bite at everything that comes within their vicinity. The size of the litters, however, varies enormously, judging by my animals: a female that, for example, gave birth to fourteen young one year, only had four young the next year. Unfertilized eggs are, in general, immediately eaten by the mother. All the young are housed separately in plastic terraria. In this terrarium the animals get a climbing branch, a water tray and a piece of tissue at the bottom. The animals are sprayed daily to allow the first slough to pass without problems. Only after the initial sloughing is an attempt made to get the animals to eat. I usually offer them a pink mouse as prey. The animals that refuse this get a 'jumper'. The combination of the nervous jumping of the little mouse and the aggressive behaviour of the snake often leads to good results. Sometimes it also helps to smear the mouse with chicken blood. In my experience, the animals that will not eat independently, do so after being force-fed a few times. It goes without saying that this force-feeding is a delicate task, actually a job for a more experienced snake keeper. Only when the young have eaten independently for a while can they be put together in a small terrarium.

CONCLUSION

In my opinion, *Corallus enydris enydris* is a beautiful tree boa. The combination of the brilliant colours, the bold behaviour and, not to be forgotten, its relatively low price, makes it an attractive snake to keep. Although adult (captive bred) animals are not so difficult to keep, the young can sometimes be problematical. Because of this they are not, in my opinion, snakes that are suitable for the beginner.