

ABSTRACTS OF LECTURES GIVEN ON SNAKE DAY 1995

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■ KEEPING AND BREEDING *NATRIX* SPECIES

By: Steven Bol, Nieuweweg 86, NL-2675 BE Honselersdijk, The Netherlands.

Translation: René van der Vlucht.

The keeping and breeding of *Natrix* species was illustrated by *Natrix maura*, the viperine snake. With this species the speaker has gained most experience. In addition a number of other *Natrix* spp. were discussed with which the speaker also gained experience and which he sometimes bred successfully with during the last few years.

Natrix maura is kept in a terrarium of which the land part is kept absolutely dry and in which a large water bowl comprises 30 to 50% of the total floor area. In certain spots the temperature can reach 30-35°C. The rest of the terrarium is kept cooler so the animals can choose their own optimal temperature. One or two times a week the animals are fed with living or dead fish (freshwater spp. like roach and smelt). The animals are given a hibernation period of 2-4 months in the refrigerator at a temperature of 4-8°C. In spring they mate and from May until August one or two clutches of 4 - 15 eggs are laid. The eggs are incubated 'au bain marie' at 27-28°C. After about 45 - 50 days the eggs hatch and after about 7 days the young sloughed and were fed small live fish. The young are also hibernated for about 6 weeks at 4-8°C. The speaker has bred *Natrix maura* this way over the last 10 years which has resulted in over 200 young.

In an almost identical way the speaker has also bred over 90 *Natrix tessellata*, over 100 *Nerodia fasciata* and 18 *Nerodia sipedon*. The *Nerodia* spp. are ovoviviparous.

Breeding of *Amphiesma stolata* was also discussed. These animals can bear a resting period at 12-15°C and at the end of the summer 6 eggs were laid. These hatched after 6 days and three young remained alive.

Furthermore breeding of *Rhabdophis subminiatus* was discussed. Fourteen eggs were obtained from which 11 young hatched. Of these only 1 could be kept alive.

Also experiences were discussed on the keeping of *Nerodia taxispilota* (requires a resting period of about 2 months at 15-20°C), *Rhabdophis tigrinus* and *Xenochropis piscator*. The poor breeding results with these species is often caused by the poor condition in which these animals are imported. Finally illnesses of *Natrix* spp. and their cures were discussed.

In conclusion *Natrix* and similar spp. form a highly interesting group of snakes that present a challenge to both the novice and the experienced snakekeeper and can give great pleasure.

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■ THE VARIOUS SPECIES OF *TRIMERESURUS*

By: John Tashjian and Gernot Vogel.

By means of an extensive collection of splendid slides, made by John Tashjian, an overview was given of the many different species of *Trimeresurus* and their often brilliant color morphs. Expert comments to these slides was given by Gernot Vogel.

■ SAND SNAKES IN THE TERRARIUM

By: Dr. Frank Brandstatter, Neunkircher Zoologischer Garten, D-66538 Neunkirchen, Germany.

Translation: Twan Leenders, English corrections by John Weir.

Sand snakes (Genus *Psammophis*) haven't been very popular terrarium subjects, so far. This is most likely caused by peoples unfamiliarity with the biology and systematics of this genus. However, sand snakes turn out to be excellent and problem free animals for a terrarium. Because of their impressive behavioural traits they are also very interesting to study and keep.

Keeping sand snakes is relatively easy. For most species, a dry and warm terrarium suffices. A sandy substratum for digging, a water tank for bathing, and a few branches for climbing are the most important features of the terrarium, depending on the species. Shelter, in the form of hiding boxes or tubes in the bottom appear to be necessary for almost every species.

Contrary to popular belief that sand snakes are problem feeders, they always take live and dead mice for prey, without exception.

During the day, the terrarium should be sufficiently heated. Temperatures up to 30°C are suitable. The photoperiod differs according to the species, although, a 10 hour light period is usually applicable. Some species go through hibernation. This is essential for successful breeding.

Sand snakes do their German name 'Sandrennatter' credit. They are extremely fast and active, which calls for some extra precautions in handling them. However, they usually settle down quickly and are problem free.