

B REEDING REPORT BOA CONSTRICTOR

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For 10 years I've been keeping Boa constrictors. With my second female and third male I finally succeeded breeding. The female is currently 6 years old, I got her from another herper. The male is probably wild caught and I obtained him from a trader who got him from a Polish zoo. The female is stocky, 2.20 metres long and weighs 14 kilograms. The male is smaller, 1.60 metres long and 6 kilograms in weight and very attractive.

In December 1997 I witnessed them mating, which took 3 days with intervals. I did not use any mating stimulation. After mating the female refused to eat,

the male, who normally didn't eat very much, now ate even less. After not getting much bigger, the female gave 'birth' in May '98. However, the result was 34 unfertilised eggs, about half the size of a chickens' egg, date-shaped and kneadable. The cause of this miscarriage was probably the administration of medicine. I forgot (a classic beginners error) to remove her food item (a rat) one night. The female didn't eat, due to her pregnancy and got bitten by the rat, which resulted in 6 large bites out of her back. I took her to the Veterinary Faculty in Utrecht, where she was treated and she healed quickly.

Up until July 1999 I didn't notice anything unusual, the female was fed regularly, although she didn't eat much. Much to my surprise on the 29th of July around 10 PM, I discovered she was giving birth. I was just in time to see the last neonate come out.



The birth of a boa. Photo: Dick van den Berg

BREEDING REPORT BOA CONSTRICTOR



There was a large litter of neonates lying in the tank, a lot of them still inside their amniotic sack.

There are few reports on breeding Boa constrictors but I found one by G.M.M Foekema in *Lacerta* (May 1973) quite old but very useful. I'm not a scientist, so I didn't measure and weigh my animals.

Immediately after the female gave birth I removed the male, the day after that I removed the female too. She was emaciated, only weighing half of her old weight, before she was gravid.

I didn't assist the neonates with getting out of their amniotic sacks, I rather let nature have her way. After cleaning everything up, I counted the neonates, 28 healthy baby snakes, all brightly coloured. And a fine sex-ratio too: 15 males and 13 females.

After cleaning up I put the adults back in the tank. The female took her job very serious, and curled up around the neonates. The male was very inquisitive and often came looking which the female and the neonates didn't seem to mind. The female showed fierce reactions to every movement on the outside of the tank, it was obvious she was hungry.

After a few days I removed the neonates and put them in a separate tank. The umbilical cords were almost dried out. I gave the female 2 small rats, 3 days later I gave her 3 big rats, which I had hastily ordered. I think more food would have been irresponsible, so I decided to leave her to herself for some rest.

On the 6th of August, eight days after being born there was a shedding feast. All the neonates started shedding simultaneously. Five days after they had



Result of hard labor! Photo: Dick van den Berg

shed, I started feeding, the neonates were at that point 2 weeks old. Within two days eighteen ate, the others ate two weeks later. Not that I was worried but they were kind of slow starters. Probably the young were born so well nourished, they didn't need to feed for such a long time.

On the 31st of August I did my third round of simultaneous feeding, three small tanks next to one another, baby snakes in it and three adult mice. The mice are grabbed and constricted within ten seconds. I'm done within a few hours once they get the hang of it. I feed them two to three mice every two weeks now and not one lingers. It only takes me two hours now.

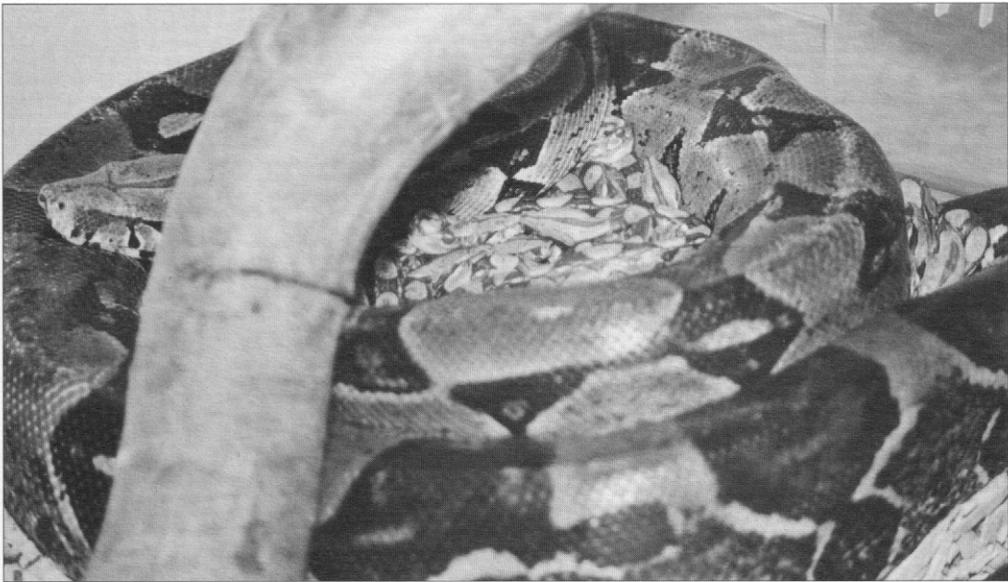
It's now the 29th of October and I still have 22 left after the Snake-day in Houten, they grow fast and get more attractive by the day, they are now about 75 cm (30 Inch) and have grown chubbier too.

This was quite an experience for me and I hope to go through this more often in the future, if only to put a halt to the ever festering trade in wild caught snakes. Unfortunately our own Snake-day is a sad example of this. You are able to order the most exceptional snakes if only you have enough cash.

LITERATURE

Foekema, G, *Development and reproduction of Boa constrictor (Linnaeus) in a living room terrarium.* Lacerta (1973)

Translation: Peter Schilperoord
Corrections: Mark Wootten



A boa mother taking care of her children. Photo: Dick van den Berg

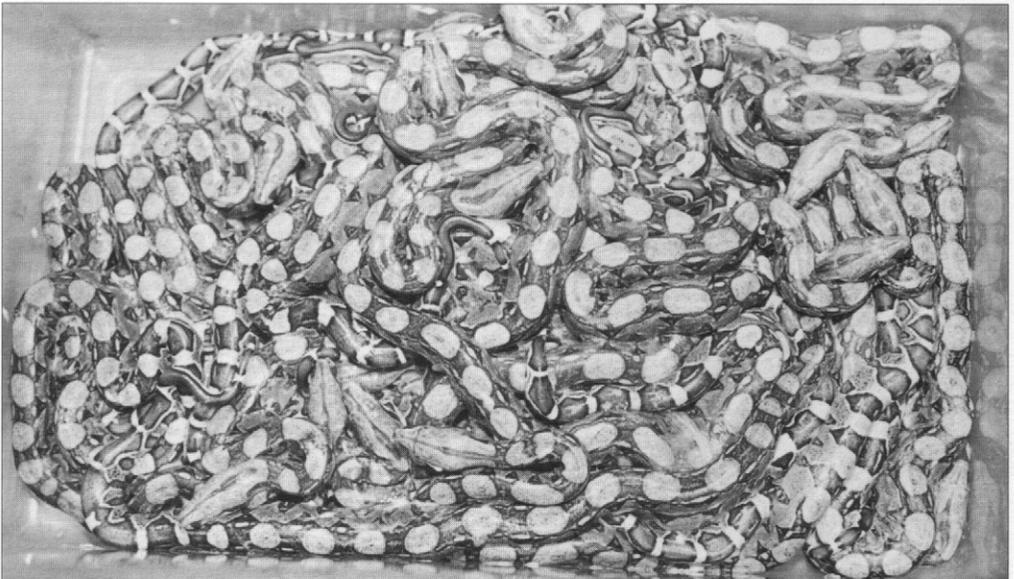




The first prey. Photo: Dick van den Berg



A mass-sloughing. Photo: Dick van den Berg



A beautiful boa-picture. Photo: Dick van den Berg