snake breeder

The International Newsletter for Snake Enthusiasts

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for Snake Enthusiasts

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FREE COPIES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
Readers are invited to submit articles on any aspect of snake keeping and breeding whether they be crisply laser printed or hastily scribbled on the back of a cornflakes packet. Instead of offering money (which you would only squander anyway) we will send you five free copies of the issue containing your article and extend your subscription.

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS AND RENEWALS
Thank you to the following people who have recently subscribed or renewed their subscriptions to snake breeder.

K Schulz (USA), K Saunders, S McCallum, J Reilly, M Stokes, P Hughes, I Bastick, C Roberts, K Burnett, J & T Mead (USA), P Lucas (Cyprus), S Dines, J Franklin, P Oliver, M Johnson, A Mayston, E Lough, B Williams, E Schroeder (USA), W Lloyd, G Vogel (Germany) & B Kizelshteyn (USA).

The Care and Captive Breeding of the Desert Glossy Snake (*Arizona elegans eburnata*)

by Caro Lynn Anderson (USA)

There are seven known subspecies of *Arizona elegans* ranging over the southwestern United States and areas of Mexico; they differ most noticeably in the subtle overall coloration, an apparent adaption to their local terrain.

The pair of young adults that I am keeping were captured in the wild in the high desert area (elevation 3000 to 3500 feet above sea level) of Landers, California. Though each was about 28 inches at the time, they have voracious appetites and are about 32 inches long at present.

My snakes are a beautiful shade of warm beige, with irregular tan saddle markings down the back, and various darker speckles; when you look closely at the dorsal scales many have a small amount of orange on the upper edge as well. The underside of the snake is a glossy white and the eyes are dark brown and relatively large with a dark stripe angled through them. This is a very attractive snake, smooth, slender and graceful and, while it can reportedly grow to four feet in length, it seldom exceeds three feet, making it a conveniently inoffensive snake for captivity.

In behaviour too, the Glossy Snake is peaceful. Like the more widely known Rosy Boa, it is a docile snake that can bite but seldom does. Unlike the Rosy Boa the Glossy Snake is quick and slippery when captured and will thrash around vigorously to loosen your grip.

The Glossy Snake is active at night and in the early morning hours and is well adapted for burrowing in its sandy habitat. In the wild Glossy Snakes eat primarily lizards for which their speed and agility are essential yet in captivity they appear to like and thrive on a diet of small mice. I suspect that the reason for this discrepancy is that in the wild, lizards are fairly prevalent, while mice small enough for a Glossy Snake to consume are not, or they are protected by the presence of an adult mouse, against which the Glossy Snake would be a poor match

The Glossy Snake has a limited gape and is not the most effective constrictor. Pinky and small fuzzy mice are taken live, while larger fuzzy or small furry mice are subdued by constriction or by the snake pressing against them, as it might do in a burrow. (A Glossy Snake will take on more than one small mouse simultaneously in this manner.) Initially my snakes accepted food after three to five days and in each case only live pinkies were accepted in darkness. Thereafter they switched with little difficulty to fuzzy mice, then pre-killed fuzzy or small furry mice. Pinky rats, it may be noted, produced fear and were totally rejected. (Bear in mind too that older snakes are less adaptable and should not be captured.) Using tongs, a slight jiggle or dragging of the prey is sufficient to inspire feeding and a meal usually consists of several mice of the appropriate

size.

With kind and thoughtful management Glossy Snakes rapidly lose their fear of their keeper and, after the first meal or so, appear to be undaunted by human presence or the amount of light when they are feeding. In fact the female I have will eat in or out of her cage and also from my hand though I recommend and normally use tongs. These are alert snakes and seem aware that my appearance means 'room service'. Their appetite can often be predicted by wiggling a finger outside the glass; a hungry and unintimidated Glossy Snake will stalk it. (Don't excite them into hitting the glass.)

Since Glossy Snakes are essentially shy and since virtually all available Glossy Snakes are wild-caught the key to success with this species is to maintain them so as to minimise their fear. A snake that is never handled will always be somewhat afraid of you and upset by routine cage cleaning. As already mentioned a wild Glossy Snake is no picnic to hold and the tighter you hold on the more panic and chance of injury to the snake you will cause. What has worked well for me is to initially handle the snake outside several times in the early evening here in their familiar desert where I too reside. Like magic the snake is reassured by familiar surroundings; when you think of it, for a wild snake to be captured and taken indoors is probably as nice an experience as if we were taken hostage by a UFO! Anyway the snake stops being panicky, the handler stops hanging on too tightly and the snake discovers that it is not under attack and starts to cling naturally to your hand or wrist, and you are well on your way to a peaceful co-existence with a remarkably nice snake.

To house a Glossy Snake a 10 to 20 gallon aquarium with a soft (nylon) screen lid is adequate. I house my Glossies separate except for mating, just to play it safe. I use paper towels for a substrate with a hot-block heater under part of the cage and a thermometer mounted on one of the walls. Air temperatures of 80° to 85° F during the day and somewhat cooler at night appear comfortable. A small water bowl is needed and various furnishings for privacy are appreciated including drift-wood, rocks, tree bark tunnels and even shredded/crumpled paper towelling to hide in. They are not notorious climbers so a tall cage with branches would be wasted.

Apart from the acceptance of food and handling a good way to assess the environment you've created is to see if the snakes are healthy and able to reproduce. I've had the male Glossy Snake for 13 months while the female was obtained only this year, in April. Last year the male refused food after mid-November and, allowing plenty of time for complete digestion, he was hibernated from late December to mid-March at approximately 54° to 59° F. This is comparable to the local winter conditions as the female would have experienced. The winter cool-down appears necessary for this species.

In late May (22nd) both snakes appeared healthy, well-fed and receptive to mating, so they were introduced. They were

observed mating the following morning and three more times during the next six days after which they were separated. They seemed very compatible and unaggressive toward each other and the female even continued to feed between matings. (I placed her in her own cage for food and rest, on a hunch, and this seemed to agree with her.) She continued to feed heavily until the 8th of June at which time she was quite swollen with eggs. On the 28th of June she laid eight eggs, each approximately 1½" x 5/8" in size. (Glossy Snakes have been known to lay up to 24 eggs.) Her voracious appetite returned later that night. After about two weeks the smallest egg (1¼") became mouldy and misshaped and was removed. The other seven eggs appear healthy, they are being incubated at 80° to 82° F and are due to hatch around the end of August or the beginning of September.

Since this is my first time breeding snakes and incubating eggs I am very much elated that, so far, everything has progressed according to plan. I am very curious (and hopeful) to see if the hatchlings will accept pinkies, instead of tiny lizards...expect an update as soon as I know. There appears to be no written record on the captive breeding of Glossy Snakes prior to this so this is either the first such breeding or, more likely, just that no one has bothered to share their experiences. Either way, as this snake becomes better known hopefully more captive bred hatchlings will become available. This is far too nice a snake to overlook!

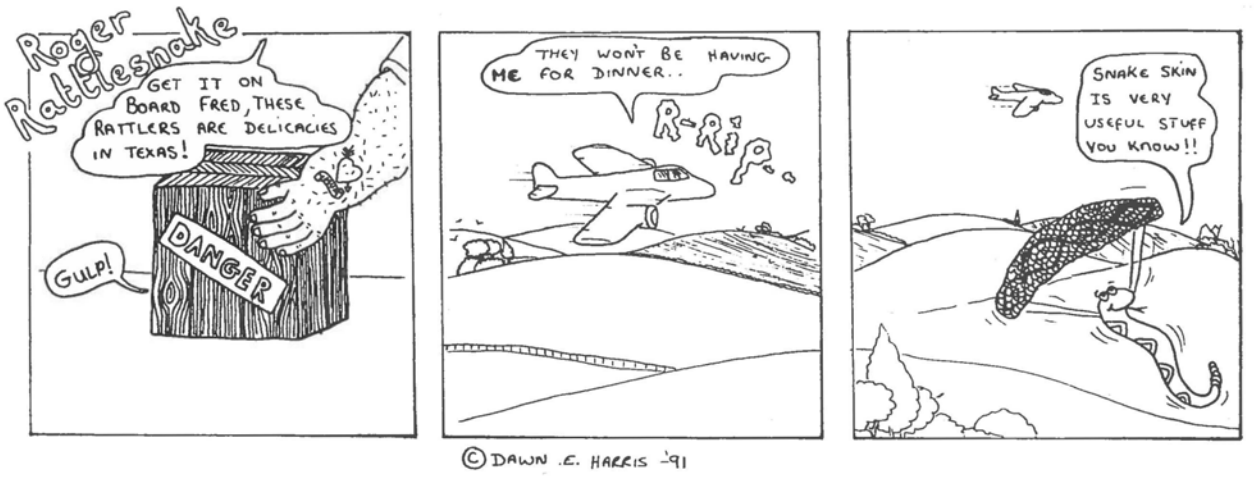
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A Visit to the European Snake Day, Utrecht, Holland, October 1991

by Kevin J Hingley

This was my first visit to the Snake Day event, indeed my first ever visit to Holland. The Snake Day is organised by the European Snake Society, formerly known as the Dutch Snake Society. I was to have attended last year's event and had agreed to lecture at the meeting but had to pull out at the last minute because of a short stay in hospital. I was then invited to attend in 1991 and again asked to lecture - this time I was just hoping that everything would go according to plan. Needless to say, it did and I finally made it.

My trip began at Birmingham Airport on Friday the 18th of October. I flew to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport where Guido and Astrid Gomes had previously arranged to collect me and take me to my hotel. There were no hitches and within an hour I was there. Astrid was patiently waiting and we went to the car and left for Utrecht.

After finding the hotel and checking in they took me to the home of Pieter Stoel where I was given tea and biscuits before viewing his snakes. Oddly enough Guido and Astrid have chosen not to keep any snakes because they take long summer holidays and don't wish to impose on their friends to look after their snakes during their absence - quite admirable.

In the evening, after I'd returned to my hotel, Anton van Woerkom, came to the hotel and we went for a couple of beers and a chat. I hadn't seen or had much contact with Anton since about 1983 so we had a bit of catching up to do. A reasonably early night was in order however, as I needed a clear head to deliver my lecture and Anton and the rest of the committee had the Snake Day to concentrate on.

Saturday morning came and I was up with the lark, had breakfast and an amiable chap called Paul came to take me to Utrecht University where the event is held.

Like the IHS Fair in September people were already queuing to get in and at 9.30am things were under way. I had an hour and a half to look around the livestock that was on sale before giving my lecture at 11am. Time passed quickly and after a slight hiccup with the projector carousel we were ready to roll. The lecture theatre was reasonably full and in just under an hour my speech was complete and seemingly well received. I collected my slides and took the opportunity to have another look around and talk to the small British contingent and meet a few European pen-friends of long standing. I was surprised that there were only maybe 20 to 25 British visitors there and that's probably a generous estimate. There were probably some 600 to 700 people in total.

At the end of the day, and after the committee and ordinary members had helped clean up, about 16 of us went for a meal. The group comprised Dutch, German, Swiss and

Italian nationals - as well as myself, of course.

After the meal I wandered into Utrecht and found the bar that Anton and I had visited the night before and had a few beers just to round off the night.

I had the following day (Sunday) to myself. I remembered that the group Lacerta were holding an exhibition and series of lectures at Blijdorp Zoo in Rotterdam so I decided to take the train and have a look.

I was very impressed with both the zoo's reptile collection and the exhibition Lacerta had organised. Anyone finding themselves in Rotterdam is recommended to visit the zoo. The amphibian section was small though and in the heavily planted aquaria it was difficult to see the exhibits.

I'd missed the morning lectures but managed to catch Vince Scheidt's talk on the herpetofauna of Carolina. I took the opportunity to have a quick chat with him at the end of it. I didn't see any of the British crowd there though, but most of them had ferries to catch so it's hardly surprising.

I left around 4pm and caught the train back to Utrecht. I made the most of my last night there, treating myself to a slap-up Chinese meal and stumbling into a small, friendly bar amidst much local celebration for someone's birthday. The perfect end to a perfect weekend.

Reptile-Book Collecting #4

by Richard Trant

Snakes and Snake Hunting
by Carl Kauffield (1911-1974)
266 pages. 6 b/w plates.
Published by Hanover House in 1957. Price around £25.
Possible source is JG Animals and Natural History Books, Streatham Vale, London.

For many herpetologists the name Carl Kauffield immediately brings to mind *Snakes, the Keeper and the Kept*. Although that book is a good guide to the hobby, interspersed with his snake adventures in the zoo and field, his real gem, acknowledged by most reptile book collectors, is *Snakes and Snake Hunting*.

The style of this man's writing is such that you feel as though you are there, looking over his shoulder, as he takes you up the Huachuka Mountains or through the Okefenokee swamps and describes in wonderful detail the region's flora and fauna.

Kauffield's love of snakes, especially rattlers, is legendary. He boasted of having taxa of all North American rattlesnakes on display at Staten Island Zoo, New York, at one time!

Unfortunately Kauffield's pinpointing of snakes' habitat angered conservationists as many amateur snake fanciers flocked to these sights and over-collected the animals. Nevertheless, *Snakes and Snake Hunting* makes absorbing reading and, although scarce, it is worth searching for a copy.

The Great Escape?

by Mark Johnson

I suppose nearly every reptile keeper has lost one of their animals at some time and I'm no exception.

I have a varied collection of snakes built up over the last four or five years including normal Kingsnakes and Corn Snakes along with tri-colours, Gopher Snakes, Sand Boas and Rainbow Boas.

Hatchlings and adults of small species are housed in plastic boxes which are then placed on shelves. Heat is provided at one end of the box from a heating cable which is located in a groove at the back edge of the shelf. I have found this to be a very efficient method of heating large numbers of small containers. My larger animals are housed in glass-fronted cages built from wafer board and heated by individual heater pads. I have found these cages to be quite secure, with a wedge being used to stop the sliding glass door from moving.

Boxes have, however, proved to be a different matter. Eighteen months ago I acquired a pair of very young Sand Boas, *Eryx tataricus*. I placed one each into small plastic boxes of the clear type with lids which merely fit inside the side edge. Initially all was well and the animals fed well on pinkies and began to grow.

In August 1990 to my horror I found one of the lids was open by a quarter of an inch at one end. I still don't know if I had not put the lid back properly after feeding or if the snake (now bigger and stronger) had pushed the lid off. Needless to say much raking about revealed only sand!

A frantic search of the room failed to reveal any trace of the snake and only increased my fears by the discovery of a hole in a floor board caused by a knot falling out. However, I didn't give up hope and my patience was rewarded some hours later by a scream from my wife who had gone to a cupboard in the room. "Grab it!", says I. "Can't!", says she and one very quick Sand Boa disappeared into a gap between the skirting board and a floor board - that's modern houses for you.

With the aid of a torch I watched in horror as the poor little animal slithered slowly backwards and down the cavity of the wall to certain starvation and death. I examined the same spot for a number of days after, hoping the snake may be able to crawl back, but without success. I resigned myself to never seeing the snake again.

At about this time I bought a pair of Speckled Kingsnakes, *Lampropeltis getulus holbrooki*. I also put these into plastic containers; on this occasion two litre ex-ice cream tubs. Again the snakes did well and began to grow. I have found these snakes to be very strong, always pushing at the sides and lids of the boxes and at the end of April this year I found one corner of the female's box open and the snakes AWOL. Once again a search of the snakes' room proved fruitless. Rubber bands around the boxes were now the order of the day as I didn't want to lose anything else.

Losing one snake had been bad enough but losing the second was devastating.

The month of May this year was, as you probably remember if you live in Britain, quite a warm month and this was the start of the house decorating season for me. On May the 14th, almost ten months to the day since I lost the Sand Boa, I walked round to the front of the house and was amazed to see a familiar small green and fawn coloured body crawling out of the gap between two paving slabs. I could hardly believe my eyes but immediately caught hold of the animal and after some gentle pressure managed to ease it out of the gap. Apart from a small lump on the side of its head and looking emaciated and dehydrated the snake looked quite good. At least it was alive and had survived quite a hard winter (presumably hibernating) and ten months without food. I put it back into its box (lid securely on) and two days later it fed. After a couple of weeks and a couple more feeds it sloughed and the lump on its head disappeared.

I thought I was pretty lucky to get the Sand Boa back but, in July, my son came into the house proudly carrying the missing Speckled Kingsnake. He had found the snake under a hedge at the side of the house. This animal had only been out for four months. Again it was in good condition and fed within a day of recapture.

So there you are. If you lose an animal don't give up hope. I didn't when I lost a third snake; a three foot Honduran Milksnake. That turned up a fortnight later on the top of a wardrobe!

A Different Point of View

by Chris and Marcia Martin

Over the life of this publication many different points of view have been expressed about light bulbs versus ceramic heaters or electronic versus mechanical thermostats. I am sure many readers can recall the various debates.

During this time one fact seems to have gone unchallenged - until now. It has been widely agreed that the number one factor to ensure the reptile you purchase survives is the quality of the animal itself. It is readily accepted that captive-bred animals, not imported animals, will offer you the best chance of keeping them successfully. We would be very interested in our fellow readers' opinions on this theory. Although we accept that the quality of the animal is very important we think there is an even more important factor; the vivarium set-up. If you purchase a reptile from a good source and you place it in a set-up that has the wrong conditions then the reptile cannot survive. If you purchase a second animal that is say only 50% healthy and place it in a first class set-up the chances are much better that the animal will survive. So the number one factor to ensure your animal survives must be the vivarium set-up and, obviously, this also includes the vivarium design.



SNAKES IN PRINT

Royal News
Volume 3 Number 4
Lee Bowler, 37 Sixty Acres, Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 OPE.

▸ **Helping Royals** by Frank Lundburg. (5 pages.)

Reptile and Amphibian Magazine
Nov/Dec 1991
Norman Frank, R & A Magazine, RD3, Box 3709, Pottsville, PA 17901, USA. (Available in the UK from Nick Gilchrist, 151 Cranmore Avenue, Park South, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 2EW.)

▸ **A Caesarean Section in a Snake** by J Brad Lichtenhan MD. (4 pages, 1 colour plate.)

▸ **Cobras** by Roy Pinney. (9 pages, 5 colour plates.)

Litteratura Serpentium
Volume 11 Number 4 August 1991
The European Snake Society, Pauwenveld 18, 2727 DE Zoetermeer, The Netherlands.

▸ **Growth of the Northern Rattlesnakes** by Ton Steehouder. (4 pages.)

▸ **Sydney's Snakes** by Raymond Hoser. (10 pages, 10 colour plates.)

▸ **The Eastern Hognose Snake, *Heterodon platyrhinos*** by Pete Strimple. (2 pages.)

Lacerta
Volume 49 No 6 Aug/Sept 1991
Nederlandse Vereniging Voor Herpetologie en Terrariumkunde, Zoetendaal 213, 6662 XM Elst (Gld). The Netherlands.

▸ **De Argentijnse boa, *Boa constrictor occidentalis*, in gevangenschap** by HL van der Heyden. (2 pages, 1 colour plate. Dutch with English abstract.)

▸ **De Pacifische boa, *Candoia carinata paulsoni*, een eenvoudig te verzorgen kleurenjuweeltje** by HL van der Heyden. (4 pages, 1 colour plate. Dutch with English abstract.)

EVENTS

Items for inclusion in this column are welcome and should include time, date, venue and a contact telephone number.

20th September 1992

IHS Reptile Fair 1992
Sports Hall
Alumwell Centre
Primley Avenue
Walsall
West Midlands

Contact the IHS at 65 Broadstone Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 1JA.

MISCELLANEOUS

ARC Fact Sheets

The Guildford-based Amphibian and Reptile Club and Rescue (ARC) are producing a series of fact sheets for reptile and amphibian enthusiasts. Titles available so far include

Thinking of Keeping Reptiles?, *The Responsibilities of Keeping Large Snakes*, *Royal Pythons*, *Iguanas* and *Fire Salamanders*. The leaflets are free to non-members but requests, listing the title(s) you require, must include an sae. Contact Mrs S Hughes, Snakelands, 1 Springfield, Elstead, Godalming, Surrey GU8 6EG. ARC annual membership fees are adult £8, junior £5, family £14 and associate £20.

Herp-Net

If you live in the United States and have a computer and modem you can contact other enthusiasts, exchange information and discuss reptiles via the Herpetology On-Line Network. Herp-Net is an open-access computer bulletin board serving the national herpetological community. Any computer or terminal can access one of Herp-Net's ten lines at 300/1200/2400 bps, 24 hours a day on (215) 464 3562. Further enquiries to Herp-Net, PO Box 52261, Philadelphia, PA 19115.

European modem owners can access some of Herp-Net's files (including a list of US herpetological organisations, clubs and educational sources) which have been uploaded to Ohio-based CompuServe's *Pet Forum*. For further information about Compuserve telephone 0800 289 458 (free) in the UK, 155-31 79 (free) in Switzerland, 0130-4643 (free) in Germany and (614) 457 8650 in the USA.

Name-That-Snake Competition

From a total of 41 names entered by 11 **sb** readers, Jerry Cole who bred the two-headed California Kingsnake, chose **'Lampropeltis getulus califoureyes'** as the winner. The prize, a copy of *The A-Z of Snake Keeping* by Chris Mattison, goes to Mr A Wright in the West Midlands. Sadly, the snake died on the 30th October, cause unknown.

MAILBAG

snake breeder
159 Stanley Hill
Amersham
Bucks HP7 9EY



Dear **snake breeder**,

I have only recently discovered the world of snake keeping and I would like to buy more books, both old and new, on the subject. Can you supply the addresses of any herpetological book sellers?

Yours sincerely,

M Evans
Notts

sb: Try some of the following addresses. It is always worth including an international reply coupon (IRC) for overseas enquiries and an sae for the UK.

Steven Simpson
PO Box 853
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BN1 5DY

AJ Mobbs
65 Broadstone Ave
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West Midlands

JG Animals
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SW16

Koeltz Scientific Books
PO Box 1360
D-6240 Koenigstein
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The Herp House
1750 Haines Road
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Ohio 44076
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Herpetological Booksellers
15 Goodwill Lane
Holbrook
New York 11741
USA

CLASSIFIED ADVERTS

FOR SALE

Adult female **Colombian Rainbow Boa** (*Epicrates cenchria maurus*) £90. Adult female **Northern Pine Snake** £85. Adult male **Florida Kingsnake** £85. Subadult female **Prairie Kingsnake** £85. Hatchling **Everglades Rat Snake** £20. Contact S McCallum, 12 Hartington Street, Bedford MK41 7RP.

Very large adult male **Mexican Red Knee Tarantula** (*Brachypelma smithii*) £65. Phone (0483) 420969 (Surrey) after 6.30pm.

California Kingsnakes £35. **Speckled Kingsnakes** £30. **Florida Kingsnakes** £35. **Desert Kingsnakes** £40. **Northern Pine Snakes** £40. All feeding. Phone Dave on (0920) 461736 (Herts).

One female captive-bred *Boa constrictor constrictor*, 4½' long, £150. Pair of adult captive-bred **Northern Pine Snakes** £130. All feeding well. Phone (0752) 790748 (Plymouth).

Male **Ladder Snake** £70. Male **Steppe Rat Snake** £20. Male **Dwarf Boa** - very rare £75. Male **Australian Water Python** £350. Female **Royal Pythons** £45 each. Please phone Tom on (0494) 815319 (Bucks).

1991 hatchlings for sale. **Black Kingsnakes** (*Lampropeltis getulus nigritus*) £40. **Bairds Rat Snakes** (*Elaphe bairdi*) £50. **Arizona Mountain Kingsnakes** (*Lampropeltis pyromelana*) £90. Blonde **Trans-Pecos Rat Snake** (*Bogertophis subocularis*) £130. **Kenyan Sand Boas** (*Eryx colubrinus loveridgei*) £45. **Hognose Snakes** (*Heterodon nasicus nasicus*). Adult breeding pair of **Desert Kingsnakes** (*Lampropeltis getulus splendida*). Telephone daytime (0923) 836228, evening (08444) 6867 (Bucks).

Nice breeding pair of **Colombian Rainbow Boas**. Steve Simpson (0273) 727328 (Sussex).

Captive-bred **Boa Constrictor**, 6' to 7', light phase. Good home essential more than fair price. Telephone Chris Baldwin on (0491) 571650 evenings (Bucks).

WANTED

Adult female Mexican Black Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus nigritus*). Phone (0483) 420969 after 6.30pm.

*****

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