

Cornsnakes, Kingsnakes and other Colubrids

Introduction

The colubrids are some of the best pet snakes available to hobbyists. They are found around the world in a variety of forms from small insect-eating snakes to large, active species in the world's tropical habitats. Corn Snakes are found in the southeastern United States. Kingsnakes are found throughout the United States from the deserts of the western United States to the humid forests of the southeast and south to Mexico. Milksnakes can be found in nature from the United States and south through Mexico and the largest species are found in South America. Ratsnakes are found around the world from the United States to Asia. Colubrids are captive-bred in large numbers by thoughtful and passionate snake breeders so healthy, stress-free specimens are always available to keepers.

Description

Most colubrids in the reptile hobby will reach adult lengths of two to five feet. Some species, such as the Bullsnares and Indigo snakes, are the largest colubrids, reaching up to 8' in length.

Housing

Of course, the enclosure you choose for your snake will be determined by the species and its age. Small colubrids such as Corn Snakes, kingsnakes, and most ratsnakes are right at home in glass terrariums in the 12" x 12" x 24" range. Adults and larger species will require enclosures in the 18" x 18" x 36" or larger.

A simple substrate for most colubrids is aspen shavings. If you would like to use a more natural substrate, we suggest mixing sand and peat moss or coconut fiber and adding a shallow layer of cypress mulch or dead leaves on top.

The enclosure should be kept relatively warm, year round. We suggest an overall temperature in the 75° to 85° F range and 65° to 72° F at night for most species. Be sure to add a warm area at one end of the enclosure so your pet snake can digest its meals properly. This can be achieved by adding a small heat mat under one end of the enclosure. This is especially important when the room they are living in is kept cool during the winter months.

Colubrids are constrictors and their diet consists of mice and other rodents. In nature, many colubrid species feed on lizards, frogs, and even birds. These species should be avoided as pets by most keepers. They will require conditions and prey items that will be difficult for most keepers to supply throughout the year. Feed your pet snake once or twice a week, depending on the size of the food and the size of the snake.

Fresh water in a shallow dish should always be available.

To avoid problems, colubrids should be kept by themselves except for breeding purposes. Kingsnakes will eat other snakes, even those of their own kind and also snakes housed and fed together can sometimes have accidents where they both try to eat the same rodent. This situation can lead to the death of one or both snakes.

Your colubrid's enclosure can be a forest type, a desert type, or a grassland type, depending on the species you choose. All species will enjoy a shelter of some type.

Though most keepers feel that snakes do not need special lighting, we feel that full spectrum lighting is important for the well-being of most snake species, especially those that are active during the day. They also enjoy basking under heat-emitting bulbs. Just be careful and do not start a fire and do not let the enclosure overheat. A thermometer in reptile enclosures is mandatory!

Colubrids are without a doubt some of the best pet snakes in our hobby. They are handleable, a manageable size, and their behaviors can provide hours of entertainment to you, your friends and your family.



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