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CAECILIANS

Rubber Eel

Typhlonectes natans

Typhlonectes natans is a fully aquatic, limbless amphibian from Colombia and Venezuela with a long, smooth, dark bluish-grey body, small eyes beneath the skin and a low dorsal fin. The species gives birth to live young and is kept in a warm, soft, well-filtered aquarium with a heavy, tight-fitting lid.

Family: Typhlonectidae

Mild skin toxins

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**25-73 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**40-250 g**
Lifespan	**10-14 years**
Active	**By day, at dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Aquatic**
Habitat	**Savanna and wetland**
Skin toxins	**Mild** Wash your hands after contact and keep your fingers away from your eyes and mouth
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 45 × 50 cm** L × W × H for 3 adults
Temperature, day	**24-30 °C**
Temperature, night	**24-30 °C**
Humidity	**100%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 30-40 cm
Water temperature	**24-30 °C**
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Insects, complete diet, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**In groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Development	**Live-bearing**
Sexually mature	**48 months**
Litter size	**1-11 young**
Gestation	**210-300 days**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Typhlonectes natans is kept in an aquarium. Three adults need at least 120 × 45 × 50 cm (around 250 litres) with a large external filter. The larger the volume of water, the more stable the water quality.

TEMPERATURE

The water temperature should be 24-30 °C. A natural seasonal variation within that range imitates the rivers of the native range and can help encourage breeding. Around 32 °C causes heat stress.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Air humidity is irrelevant, because the animal lives in the water. The air under a tight-fitting lid is saturated with moisture, which is why the box says 100 %. What counts is water quality; see the section on water.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Caecilians absorb substances through the skin, so water quality is crucial. The filter must be cycled before the animals go in.

LIGHTING AND UVB

Ordinary aquarium lighting for 12 hours a day is enough. The animals prefer darkness, so there must always be dark hides.

FEEDING

Typhlonectes natans eats almost any meaty food: earthworms, crickets, beetle larvae, prawns and other crustaceans, mussels, bloodworms, thawed fish, newborn mice and prepared food for amphibians.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species is peaceful, not territorial, and does best in a group in which the animals share hides.

NATIVE RANGE

Colombia and Venezuela.