herpy

SNAKES

Desert Sand Boa

Eryx miliaris

Eryx miliaris is a small, thick sand boa from the deserts and steppes of Central Asia that buries itself with only its eyes showing above the surface. Most grow to 40-60 cm, but the large eastern form, formerly listed as *Eryx tataricus*, can exceed 1 m. The species is calm and is often one of the easiest sand boas to get feeding.

Family: Boidae Former name: *Anguis miliaris; Boa tatarica; Eryx tataricus; Eryx speciosus; Eryx nogaiorum*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**40-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**By day, at dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 30 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-28 °C**
Basking spot	**30-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional**
Winter rest	**14-18 °C** 8-12 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Litter size	**4-15 young**
Clutches per year	**1**
Gestation	**120 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult *Eryx miliaris* needs an enclosure of at least 60 × 30 × 30 cm (length × width × height). The species uses almost no height, so floor area is what counts.

TEMPERATURE

The heat comes from below. Put a heat tape or heat mat under no more than a quarter of the floor at one end, controlled by a thermostat, so that the substrate at the warm end is 30-32 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Eryx miliaris lives in a dry climate, and the enclosure should be dry. Humidity is best at 30-50 %; the figure is an estimate based on the habitat. Change the water in the bowl regularly.

LIGHTING AND UVB

UVB is not documented as necessary for *E. miliaris*, and the species spends a large part of its time hidden. A weak UVB tube can be offered as an option, provided there is plenty of cover as well.

FEEDING

Eryx miliaris takes whole prey. The staple is small mice, not much thicker than the snake itself. Prefer thawed prey to live prey.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Eryx miliaris is calm and does not bite out of fear, but it can be a greedy feeder and snap at anything that looks like food, including a hand. Handle it rarely, and wash your hands after feeding.

NATIVE RANGE

Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan.