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SNAKES

Eastern hognose snake

Heterodon platirhinos

Heterodon platirhinos is a stout colubrid from eastern North America with an upturned snout that it uses to dig in sand. When threatened it spreads its neck, hisses and finally plays dead. In the wild it feeds almost exclusively on toads, which makes it harder to keep than most other snakes: many animals will not take mice without persuasion.

Family: Colubridae English name: Eastern Hognose Snake Former name: *Heterodon platyrhinos; Heterodon browni*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**50-115 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**90 × 45 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**30-31 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-22 °C**
Humidity	**50-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**12-15 °C** 8 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**18-24 months**
Clutch size	**10-30 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**45-90 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	An adult needs an enclosure of at least 90 × 45 × 40 cm (length × width × height). Floor area matters more than height, because the species is active and digs.
TEMPERATURE	Maintain a clear gradient. The basking spot should be 30-31 °C, and the rest of the enclosure 24-29 °C by day. At night the heating is switched off, and the temperature can fall to 16-22 °C, but never below 16 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 50-60%. That is slightly more than for the close relative *Heterodon nasicus*, and a hygrometer shows whether the figure holds.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and benefits from bright daylight. The light can be on for 12 hours a day all year round or follow the seasons with 14 hours in spring, 16 in summer, 10 in autumn and 8 in winter. UVB is recommended.
FEEDING	In the wild *H. platirhinos* eats mostly amphibians, especially toads, but also lizards and other small animals. In captivity feeding is the hardest part of its care: many animals, especially young ones, refuse mice at first.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Heterodon platirhinos* is calm, but shyer and more defensive than *H. nasicus*. Keep handling to once a week. Let new animals settle for two weeks, and start only when they are feeding regularly.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Canada.