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SNAKES

Gray-banded Kingsnake

Lampropeltis alterna

Lampropeltis alterna is a slender kingsnake from the Chihuahuan Desert in the south-western USA and northern Mexico, known for its silvery grey ground colour with orange, red and black crossbands. It reaches 70-120 cm, is docile and is kept in a dry enclosure with rock-like hides. In the wild it eats mainly lizards, but in captivity it usually takes mice, and it can live for more than 25 years.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Ophibolus alternus; Lampropeltis blairi; Lampropeltis mexicana alterna*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**70-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-30 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**90 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**20-28 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**13-16 °C** 8-12 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3-13 eggs**
Incubation	**55-70 days** at 26-29 °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 × 45 cm (length × width × height).
TEMPERATURE	The enclosure needs a clear temperature gradient, so that the animal can choose its own spot. Under the heat source the surface should be 29-32 °C, and at the cool end 20-24 °C. The air in the enclosure is 20-28 °C during the day.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from a dry region and needs low to moderate humidity of 30-50%. Higher values for a longer period cause skin problems and respiratory infections.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is nocturnal and hidden and receives only little sunlight in the wild. UVB is not necessary, but is recommended for welfare.
FEEDING	In the wild lizards are the main food, but in captivity the animals usually eat frozen and thawed mice, which are the safest diet. Do not offer live rodents, because they can bite and injure the snake.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*L. alterna* is calm and tolerant and is well suited as a first snake. Give a new animal about two weeks in peace, and start handling when it eats regularly.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.