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SNAKES

Black kingsnake

Lampropeltis nigra

Lampropeltis nigra is a medium-sized to large kingsnake from the eastern USA, black, and in the southern part of its range each scale has a small yellow or white spot. It reaches 90-120 cm, eats rodents, lizards, frogs and other snakes, and is robust and easy to keep. It is kept singly in a terrestrial enclosure with a basking spot and moderate humidity and can live for over 20 years.

Family: Colubridae English name: Black Kingsnake Former name: *Lampropeltis getula nigra; Ophibolus getulus niger*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**By day and at dusk**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Wetland and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**21-28 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**5-15 eggs**
Incubation	**60-70 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	There is little species-specific knowledge about the care of *Lampropeltis nigra*.
TEMPERATURE	The animal regulates its temperature by moving between warm and cool spots, so the enclosure must have a clear gradient.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 40-60 %, measured with a digital hygrometer in the middle of the enclosure. It is higher in the cool end and at night and lower in the warm end, and that is normal. Clammy air must be avoided.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is most active by day and basks in the wild. It can manage without UVB, but UVB is recommended for the best welfare. This corresponds to Ferguson zone 2.
FEEDING	*L. nigra* is carnivorous and needs whole prey. Mice are the standard food, and as the animal grows, young rats are used.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*L. nigra* is robust and tolerant. Give a new animal about 2 weeks in peace, and begin handling only when it eats regularly.
NATIVE RANGE	United States.