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SNAKES

Desert Kingsnake

Lampropeltis splendida

Lampropeltis splendida is a medium-sized to large kingsnake from the desert regions of the south-western USA and northern Mexico, black or dark brown with yellow crossbands broken up into small spots. It reaches 90-115 cm, eats rodents, lizards and other snakes, and is robust and easy to keep. It is kept singly in a floor-type enclosure with a basking spot and moderate humidity and can live for over 20 years.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Lampropeltis getula splendida; Ophibolus splendidus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-115 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**By day and at dusk**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**21-26 °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	**5-12 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 only a little species-specific knowledge about the care of *Lampropeltis splendida*.
TEMPERATURE	The animal regulates its temperature by moving between warm and cool spots, so the enclosure must have a distinct gradient.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 40-60 %, measured with a digital hygrometer in the middle of the enclosure. It is higher at the cool end and at night and lower at the warm end, and that is normal.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is active by day and basks in the wild. It can manage without UVB, but UVB is recommended for the best welfare. This fits Ferguson zone 2.
FEEDING	*L. splendida* is a carnivore and needs whole prey animals. Mice are the standard food, and as the animal grows, young rats are used.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*L. splendida* is robust and tolerant. Give a new animal about 2 weeks in peace, and only start handling when it is feeding regularly.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.