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SNAKES

Baird's Ratsnake

Pantherophis bairdi

Pantherophis bairdi is a slender and elegant ratsnake from the dry, rocky regions of western and central Texas and north-eastern Mexico. It is orange-yellow to yellow with four dark stripes along the body, grows to 65-140 cm and climbs both in shrubs and among rocks. It is hardy, feeds willingly and is also suitable for beginners.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Elaphe bairdi; Coluber bairdi*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**65-140 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**12-20 years**
Active	**By day, at dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal, rock-dwelling and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-27 °C**
Basking spot	**30-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-21 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**17-22 °C** 10-11 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-60 months**
Clutch size	**5-10 eggs**
Incubation	**60-65 days** at 28 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Only limited knowledge exists on the care of *Pantherophis bairdi* itself. It is kept like the closely related *Pantherophis guttatus* and *Pantherophis obsoletus*, which have almost the same requirements.
TEMPERATURE	There must be a distinct temperature gradient, so that the snake can choose for itself. By day the terrarium should be 24-27 °C, down to 22 °C in the cool end, and the basking spot should be 30-32 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 40-60 %. The figure is borrowed from the close relative *Pantherophis guttatus*, as there are no measured figures for the species itself.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Pantherophis bairdi* needs a distinct day and night. The light is on for about 12 hours a day and preferably follows the seasons, controlled by a timer. Night light is unnecessary and can disturb the daily rhythm.
FEEDING	*Pantherophis bairdi* eats whole, frozen and thawed rodents. Mice are the most used food, and larger animals get small rats. Day-old chicks, quail and quail eggs give variety.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Pantherophis bairdi* is curious, active and a skilled climber. Young animals are quick and can be nervous and defensive: they may whip the tail, snap and release foul-smelling secretion.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.