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SNAKES

California Kingsnake

Lampropeltis californiae

Lampropeltis californiae is a smooth, glossy kingsnake from western North America, black or dark brown with white to pale yellow cross-bands or a single white dorsal stripe. It reaches 75-120 cm, eats rodents and other snakes, and is robust and tolerates handling well. It lives for more than 20 years and is kept in a floor enclosure with a basking spot and moderate humidity.

Family: Colubridae Former name: *Lampropeltis getula californiae* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**75-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-25 years**
Active	**By day, at dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert 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	An adult needs an enclosure of at least 120 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height). Larger is better, because the species is active and explores the whole enclosure.
TEMPERATURE	The animal regulates its temperature by moving between warm and cool places, so the enclosure must have a clear gradient.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The 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 belongs to Ferguson zone 2: it basks occasionally and receives some sunlight in the wild. It can manage without UVB, but UVB is recommended for the best welfare.
FEEDING	*L. californiae* is a carnivore and needs whole prey. The most important food source in captivity is mice, and as the animal grows, young rats are used.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*L. californiae* is robust and tolerant, and that is one of the reasons it is among the most commonly kept snakes. Give a new animal about 2 weeks in peace, and start handling only when it eats regularly.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.