

# REPRODUCTION OF THE ROSY BOA, *LICHANURA TRIVIRGATA*

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## INTRODUCTION

During early 1984 several young Rosy Boas were obtained from California. These were the Mexican Rosy Boa (*L.t. trivirgata*) and two intermediate forms known as 'Intermedia' and 'Myriolepis'. There is however no geographical basis to regard the intermediates as a separate sub-species. (See section on Distribution). The following account of reproduction relates to the form known as 'Intermedia'.

## DESCRIPTION

Intermedia are an extremely attractive form of the variable Rosy Boa. The markings consist of 3 even edged broad stripes of pale brown on a buff background. The dorsal stripe being slightly lighter than the stripe on the flanks. The belly markings are off-white with dark brown flecks and spots.

## RAISING THE YOUNG

The young snakes were approx. 280mm; long and marked as the adult colouration described above. Pelvic spurs were clearly visible on the male but probing proved to be inconclusive.

To encourage consistent growth the young were housed in plastic boxes in an incubation unit on 15 hours light per day throughout the first summer and winter. Temperature ranging from 24°C to 30°C (75°-85°F). Pink mice were given every 3-4 days.

By the spring of 1985 the female was approx. 440mm, the male slightly larger. The adults were placed in permanent cages with no heating apart from the light source. Minimum temperatures were approx. 13°-16°C (55°-60°F).

## REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Feeding became erratic in both the male and the female during early June and finally ceased on the 14th June.

The adults had been segregated into respective sex groups until 7th July when the female was introduced to the male. The male followed the female constantly using his spurs to stimulate the female by erecting them and prodding her flanks. Within 20 minutes they were copulating. The pair were left together and during the next 10 days continued to show mating activity. They were seen to mate again on the evening of the 10th July.

When mating activity ceased in mid July the male resumed feeding heavily, the female however did not feed again until after giving birth.

During the gestation period the female constantly moved to areas of optimum temperature, near the underfloor heater during the night and near the light during the day.

Average temperatures were 23°-28°C (74°-82°F) although directly under the lamp the temperature would be somewhat higher.

On the 6th October, 91 days from the first mating, the female sloughed. At the end of October she was often observed to be lying out straight as opposed to a more normal coiled or looped posture. By the 6th November (122 days) she was very restless.



Plate 1. *Lichanura trivirgata trivirgata*

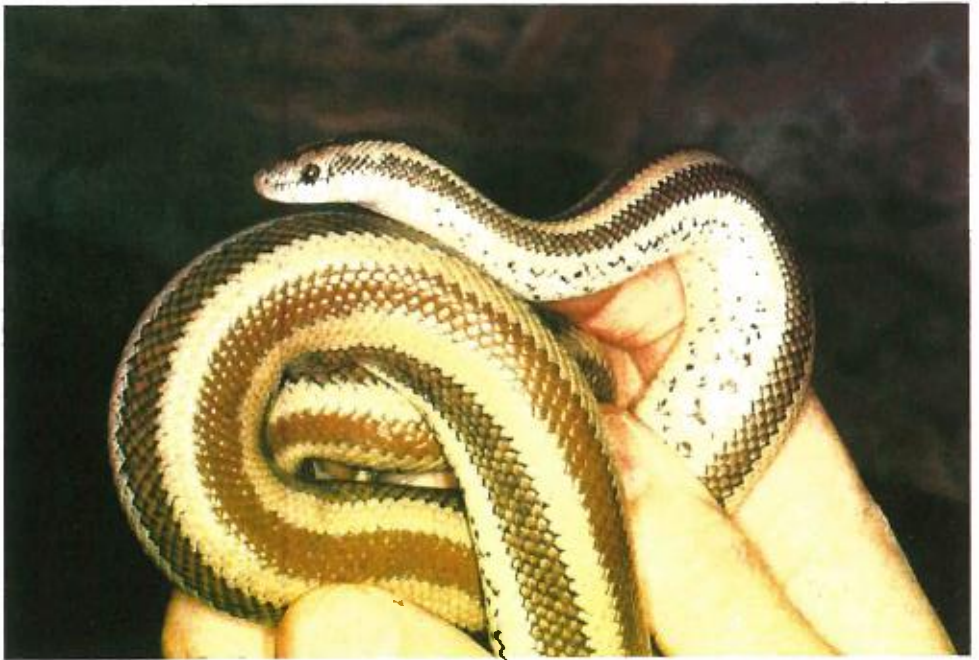


Plate 2. *Lichanura trivirgata* 'intermedia'

## BIRTH

During the night of the 124th day of gestation, (based on first mating), 3 young were produced each approx. 270mm in length. Although the female had not fed for 156 days there were no signs of massive weight loss. The overall body shape was still firm and round.

The young sloughed 14 days from birth and began feeding on the 25th day, taking pink mice. It is recorded that they do, however, sometimes feed before sloughing (Van De Pols, 1985), (Granger, 1982). From spur size identification there are 2 females and 1 male.

## ROSY BOAS IN GENERAL

There are three widely recognised sub-species of Rosy Boas all originating from California, Baja, California, Arizona and Sonora (Stebbins, 1966), (Townson, 1979).

The 'Mexican' Rosy Boa (*L.t. trivirgata*) is a very attractive sub-species having three dark chocolate stripes on a light cream background.

The Coastal Rosy Boa (*L.t. roseofusca*) has three stripes of pink, reddish brown or dull brown with irregular edges. The background colour is bluish/grey.

The Desert Rosy Boa (*L.t. gracia*) has three stripes of rose, or reddish brown with even edges on a background colour of grey or beige.

A fourth Rosy Boa has been described coming from Cedros Island adjacent to the Pacific coast of Baja California del Norte, Mexico (Ottley, J.). This has been claimed as a separate sub-species (Ottley, J.) and named *L.t. bostici*.

Other forms of Rosy Boa are generally described as either intergrades or intermediates.

Until recently the Rosy Boa was considered to be difficult to maintain for long periods in captivity often becoming susceptible to respiratory and intestinal ailments and dying in a very short time. However these observations were made on wild caught animals. The success in keeping captive bred specimens is totally different.

Rosy Boas are easy to keep and require none of the elaborate temperature requirements associated with other boas and pythons.

Despite the relatively small head size they can in fact swallow quite large prey and are extremely powerful and efficient constrictors. Prey consists of small mammals and young birds.

The Rosy Boa has been bred in the U.K. on one previous occasion. This being the Desert Rosy Boa (*L.t. gracia*) (Granger, 1982). From personal communication, experience in the reproduction was very similar to the above account.

## REFERENCES

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