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## BREEDING OF *DRYMARCHON CORAIS COUPERI*

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### DESCRIPTION

*Drymarchon corais couperi* lives in the southern part of North America in Florida, South-Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. In the wild this snake is as frequently found in dry as in wet areas. They are sometimes found in the water. They prove to be excellent swimmers. The snake is active during daytime and is most often found on the ground in low scrub. They are very active as appears from their fast movements. The head is hardly separated from the neck. The body is very powerful. The colouration is a shiny blue-black and they can measure up to 2.50 m long.

### MY OWN SNAKES

The animals came into my possession in June 1986. The male weighed 800 g and the female 1000 g. The animals were about 3 years old and fairly small for their age. The reason for this was that they were always fed too small (and not enough) prey. Eating a half-grown rat was already a problem for them. I started to give them larger prey at once. They now already eat fully grown rats with ease. They weight about 2 kg.

The way they eat is very clumsy. The prey is bitten along the whole body. Sometimes they even try to swallow the prey side-ways. During eating

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very much is produced. My animals are very attentive, active, curious, friendly and of course very beautiful. They are not aggressive nor do they try to bite.

The animals are kept separately. In fact I do this with all my snakes. The reason for this is that feeding is easier separately. As important is that the mating-stimulus is far bigger when the female is placed with the male after a period of separation.

### MATING

In November 1986 I gave the animals a winterrest up to the beginning of March at 12°C. After this the animals were kept warm for three weeks at 28°C during day time and 20°C at night. When the snakes were put back together again, they instantly mated,

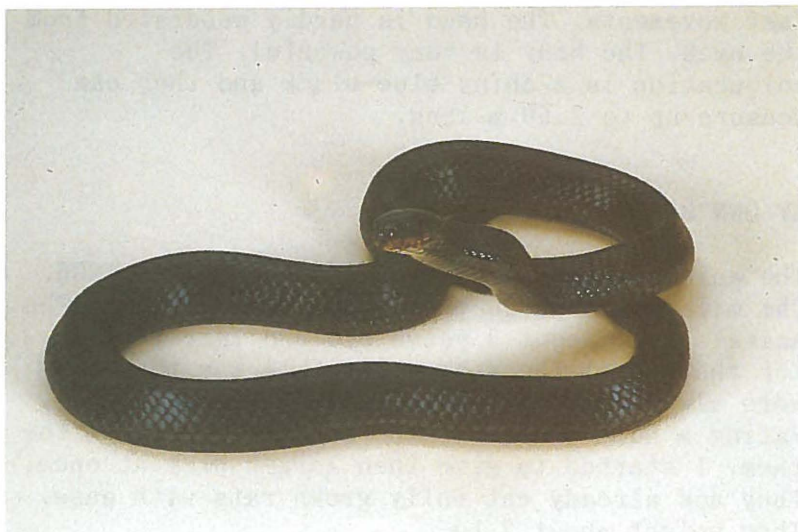


Foto 1. *Drymarchon corais couperi*. Foto: M. de Prekel.

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but without results. At the beginning of September 1987 I decreased the time of illumination from 14 to 7 hours. The intensity was lowered too, from 60 W to 15 W. The temperature dropped to about 22°C. At the end of October the animals were put back together again and mating took place immediately. When mating stopped the animals were separated again. Every other fortnight the snakes were put together again and every time mating took place instantly. This went on up to the end of January 1988. By this time the female appeared to be getting fatter. As from February all offered food was refused, something that had never happened before. Roundabout the 25th of February the female was going to shed her skin. A water-trough with boiled spagnum was placed in the vivarium. This was accepted immediately as a place to lay her eggs.

#### EGGS AND JUVENILES

On the 13th of March 12 eggs were laid. They were put into an incubator at a temperature of 27°C and a humidity of 90%. The eggs weighed about 45 g, their length was 28 cm. On the 22nd of May, after 70 days, the first juvenile hatched. The other 11 juveniles were born in the next three days.

One of the juveniles had a piece of intestine sticking out, the umbilical cord was still attached to a part of the egg-yolk and a part of the peritoneum was hanging out. This was treated by binding off and dissecting it with sterile yarn. The wound (2 cm) was taped-up as best as possible. The snakes weighed 50 g. Not one of the snakes ate voluntarily.

Up to now, 2 months after hatching, only one of them will eat of its own accord. Even small frogs, lizards and chicken-legs were offered, but without

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any result. The animals grow excellently and resemble their parents.

#### CONCLUSION

*Drymarchon corais couperi* is not a commonly kept snake among herpetologists. The reason for this is the low numbers of available wild-caught or bred animals from the United States. The juveniles in my collection are troublesome feeders, but their beauty makes up for this.

Translation: René van Marle.