
KEEPING AND BREEDING *ELAPHE SUBOCULARIS* IN THE TERRARIUM

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Contents: Description - Area of distribution -
The terrarium - Mating - and youngsters - Refer-
ences.

DESCRIPTION

The Trans-Pecos rat snake is of remarkable appearance within the genus *Elaphe*. It has a muscular body and an almost heart shaped head. Very peculiar are the eyes, both in young and adult snakes; these attract our attention immediately.

The colour can vary between beige and light brown. Two dark lines, which start just behind the head, run like interrupted H-shaped patterns over the entire upper part of the body. The belly and abdomen are smooth white. There are some variations in colour, like the blonde variation.

Elaphe subocularis is a snake with its own character. Whether it has been imported or bred in captivity, most of them stay wild and aggressive. My snakes however - both are bred in captivity and in my possession since March 1986 - are very calm and tame.

AREA OF DISTRIBUTION

Elaphe subocularis lives in the south of New Mexico, West-Texas and North-Mexico. It lives in the Chihuahua desert and the areas of the Rio

Grande and Trans-Pecos.

THE TERRARIUM

I keep my snakes in a dry terrarium of 110x60x60 cm. Only when the snakes have to slough do I sprinkle some water. By day the temperature is about 24-30°C. The floor is covered with sand. I feed my snakes half grown mice, small rats and sometimes day old chicks.

MATING AND YOUNGSTER

In July 1986 the female had a length of 100 cm, the male measured 120 cm. They weighed respectively 270 and 520 g. On 27 August 1986 the female laid 4 eggs, which I placed on foam in an incubator. Because the eggs did not develop well, I placed them on sand later. Nevertheless they dried out in September. Both animals had a hibernation period from 1 December till 1 March. During this period the light was dimmed and the temperature was 12-16°C.

After this period I separated both sexes for a month. In the middle of July, after I had put the snakes together, several matings took place. On 29 June 1987, after I had treated the snakes in the same way as described above, the only mating I observed took place. This time, on 4 August, 7 eggs were laid. The eggs measured 40-50 mm in length and 20-25 mm in width. As substrate I used vermiculite. I kept the temperature at 27,5°C and the humidity at 90-100%. After 70 to 71 days, 6 young snakes hatched. Their length was about 35 cm, their weight 15 g. After two weeks they sloughed for the first time. The youngsters ate nest mice immediately; they ate up to 8 nest mice each week and grew very rapidly. The raising of

hatchlings is no problem as long as the snakes are kept dry.

REFERENCES

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