

BREEDING *TROPIDOPHIS MELANURUS* *MELANURUS* IN CAPTIVITY

By: Anders Sjöbeck, c/o Sjöbeck, Ernst Ahlgrensngatan 4C, 217 59 Malmö, Sweden.

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THE TERRARIUMS

The *Tropidophis* each have their own terrarium, which measures 60x30x40 cm (lwxh). A 20 Watt fluorescent tube is used for illumination; during the summer months it is also sufficient as a heating source. During the winter the terrarium is heated by 15-25 Watt lightbulbs.

The interior exists of two flower pots which are turned upside down, each in a place with a different temperature. They serve as a hiding place and are being frequently used as such. Often, the animals are lying with their heads looking out from the top of the flower pots. There are also some stones and a drinking trough. For a substrate is used first a 3-4 cm thick layer of catsand, on top of that I put an equal thick layer of aquarium gravel.

In summer the daytime temperature is $\pm 27^{\circ}\text{C}$, at night the temperature is $22-24^{\circ}\text{C}$. In winter the daytime temperature is $24-32^{\circ}\text{C}$, at night the temperature is $17-20^{\circ}\text{C}$.

FOOD

The animals are being fed with dead, nearly half-grown mice. In the evening they are placed in the flower pot in which the snake hides itself. Generally everything is eaten by the morning. About every fourth feed the mice are injected with a few drops of polymin.

COPULATION AND BIRTH

In July 1987 the male and the female were placed together in the same terrarium. They did not show the least interest in each other, most of the time they each lay in their own flower pot looking at each other, their heads just visible from the opening of the pot.

In October the male started to visit the flower pot of the female. On 31 October I saw the first real copulation, when I lifted the flower pot I saw the female completely entwined by the male, their tails twisted. It seems as if the male had wound itself around a somewhat large prey. On 8 November they copulated again. In October the animals were more active than normal. The male refused food during that month.

On 26 November the male ate again and on 7 December they copulated again, the temperature was 32°C . On 8 February the female weighed 275 g, the male 150 g. On 3 April the female weighed 300 g and on 11 April I separated them again. During the period of 12 January to 31 May the female ate one mouse. On 11 July the female ate one mouse as on 16 August. On 23 August she is very active, the lumps in her body are clearly visible. 1 September she weighed 285 g. On 27 September she ate one mouse and on 13 October she refused to eat. On 22 October she gave birth to eight live young and two stillborn young.

THE RAISING OF THE YOUNG

I tried to feed the young with plaice fillet and spawn, but they did not seem to like either of those. I then started to feed them with well-dried, dehydrated cat food in which I mixed egg-yolk, milk and calcium carbonate. The young were being fed this mixture through a tube. This force-feeding was done every fourteen days.

On 16 December two young died, at the same time three young sloughed for the first time. On 19 December the remaining young sloughed. In the end all young started to eat tadpoles and aquariumfish of the right size on their own.

They each got a small, plastic terrarium, measuring 20x10x7 cm (lwxh). These were furnished with some paper on the bottom, a water dish, and a matchstick box for a hiding place. The terrariums were placed on an electrically heated plate with an adjustable thermostat, the temperature was 27°C.

Since March 1989 the animals have been with a good friend of mine, but unfortunately no more copulations have taken place. In the summer of 1991 I will take the animals back home with me to see whether I will be able to breed again with these animals.



Foto 1: *Tropidophis melanurus melanurus*, man, male.
Foto A. Sjöbeck.



Foto 2: *Tropidophis melanurus melanurus*, vrouwtje met 3 dagen oud jong. Female and three days old hatchling. Foto A. Sjöbeck.