



Kenyan Sand Boa

Pantherophis guttatus



Fossil

I was born on July 15th, 1997.

I am one of the zoo's educational **ambassador animals!** I live behind the scenes, so you won't see me on exhibit, but you may see me during educational programs or pop-ups around the zoo!

SAND BOAS AT A GLANCE



- Unlike the majority of snake species, their eyes and nostrils are located on the top of the head, allowing the sand boa to hide its body beneath the sand while still being able to breathe and see above the surface.



- In the wild, these snakes eat rodents, eggs, lizards, and birds
- At the zoo, our Kenyan sand boa eats mice.
- Their tail is very short, tapering quickly to a dull point, and cannot be coiled. The scales on their tail are keeled, helping it to keep a grip on the sand as it is burrowing.



- Extremely small scales to protect their skin from fine sand granules.
- Their backs are usually yellow or orange with dark brown splotches. Their bellies are usually either white or cream colored.

up to 32 inches, can weigh up to 2 pounds



Avg. life expectancy in native habitats: up to 15 years
Avg. life expectancy in human care: up to 30 years

WHERE ARE NATIVE KENYAN SAND BOA HABITATS LOCATED?



Kenyan sand boas can be found in the eastern parts of the Africa, ranging from Egypt south to Tanzania; southwest Somalia west to Kenya. They inhabit the semi-arid desert regions, scrub savannah, and rock outcroppings.

Kenyan Sand Boa Behaviors

HIDING

Sand boas spend about 80% of their lives beneath the sand. When they are not buried in sand or soil, they will hide from predators in burrows.

I'm not a very good climber, so my home has a thick layer of sand that I can dig into to feel safe!



DIGGING

Their bodies are designed for burrowing and moving through sandy soil. A shovel-like bone on their snout helps them dig and bury themselves into the ground.

The ability to burrow quite rapidly keeps me safe from predators!



DEFENSE

Kenyan sand boas are typically docile snakes. One great defense they have is their tail, which mimics their head to confuse predators. Their tail is covered in thick, armored scales.

This way I can trick predators into figuring out which end is which!



SHEDDING

Sand boas shed their skin all at once. Babies will shed more often than adults because they outgrow their skin faster.

Shedding can be stressful for me, so my keepers make sure to take extra great care of me during this time!



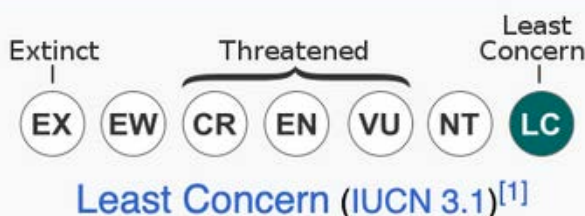
- These snakes are ovoviviparous, meaning the eggs are incubated and hatch inside the mother's body. Typically, 5-12 snakelets hatch at a time.
- The Kenyan sand boa typically hunts by lying in wait under sand for passing prey. These snakes sometimes kill their prey by suffocating it in the sand.
- Fossilized remains of sand boas have been found in rocks that date 50 million years old!
- Mating season is during the spring and early summer, and oftentimes males will have to dig the female out of the sand or soil before mating can take place.

Kenyan Sand Boa Conservation

While wild populations of this snake species are currently at stable levels, in the past this species has been taken from the wild for the pet trade.

Kenyan sand boas are of least concern currently due to the pet trade and some habitat deconstruction.

Conservation status



How can we help?

You can help keep wild sand boas safe by not purchasing pets that have been wild caught; they do not make good pets. Buy your pets from captive breeders as buying wild-caught animals can have a negative effect on natural populations.

We can help wild snake populations by leaving fall leaf litter on the ground to provide shelter and nesting materials. We can also limit our use of pesticide/rodenticide that could cause harm to or be ingested by wild snakes.