

### Introduction:

*L. aurora* is a beautiful (non-venomous) terrestrial constrictor endemic to South Africa and found in the southern to eastern Cape Province, then northwards into Natal, Lesotho, Orange Free State and Transvaal. It prefers damp localities like wet savanna, lowland forest and grasslands. *L. aurora* is a secretive species. Mature animals have an average length of 40-60 cm but may reach up to 90 cm. They are oviparous with litters of 8 to 12 eggs (35 -20 mm) the young are about 20 cm long.

It is a nocturnal snake that may bask in the early mornings or late afternoons or emerge on overcast days. and emerges at night to hunt rodents, being especially fond of nestlings. *L. aurora* is fairly rare and less common than some other species of house snakes. The conservation status of *L. aurora* is "Least Concern".

### Housing:

The enclosure for my captive bred couple *L. aurora* is 120 cm wide, 35 cm deep and 30 cm high and can easily be divided into two separate enclosures of 60 cm-35 cm-30 cm without handling the animals. I use wood chips as substrate. The decoration is sober; several hiding places are available including a plastic hiding box with moist sphagnum which they use frequently. A heating bulb in the corner creates a hot spot and a water bowl completes the interior. The average temperature at daytime is 26 degrees Celsius... At night the temperature drops to about 18 degrees Celsius. In wintertime nighttime temperature drops even a few degrees more

### Reproduction:

I'm not certain at what age *L. aurora* become sexual mature: The female had her first litter at the age of 6 years. *L. aurora* seems to have only one clutch per year. A drop in night temperature during the winter months is the breeding stimulus is in the way I keep them.

- The mating period is from mid-March until the end of April.
- The gestation period is about 46 days.
- Litters of *L. aurora* contain 8 to 12 eggs, approximately 35 -20 mm in size.
- The eggs hatch after approximately 55 days in an incubator set at 29 degrees Celsius. The incubation of the eggs is comparable with other colubrid eggs.

### Care of Juveniles:

Juveniles have a birth weight of 3 to 4 grams and a length of approximately 20 cm. Escaping is a real threat because of their size. I prefer safe above sorry. That's why I keep the juveniles in a small plastic container within a crack-proof glass terrarium. The small box has tissue on the bottom, a small hiding box with moist sphagnum, a water bowl and a small part of a plastic plant that is helpful during shedding. The terrarium stands partly on top of a heating pad keeping the daytime temperature on 29 degrees. At night the temperature drops to 20 degrees.

Because of the size of the juveniles I don't even think of probing or popping them. The difference in tail length between the sexes is significant and easy to see.

It is quite a challenge (but a nice one) to get the juvenile starting to eat. I feed them with parts of pre-killed one day old mice. Some start without hesitation after their shedding, others refuse whatever you offer them 'until death do us part'.

Once they are eating, you'll have problem-free animals.