Tutorial: How to Create a Humidity Hide! And Also: How to Create a Nesting or Lay Box!

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Reptiles and amphibians can be found in nearly all areas of the world, except perhaps Antarctica, and in nearly all types of habitats, biomes, or natural communities. They may be found in our tropical to temperate forests and woodlands, to more open grasslands and savannahs, to drier dunes, scrublands, and deserts, to even our oceans and seas, and oftentimes amongst our own gardens, parks, and backyards! While it is true to a large extent that these amazing animals do live within these larger macro-environments, they also can have much more unique and complex behaviors and natural history leading them to live more specifically in "micro-climates" or "micro-habitats".

These "micro-habitats" can often be defined as smaller areas within a larger macro-environment, such as underneath rocks or logs, in-between rock crevices, within tree cavities, or even underground or in burrows in which the overall temperature, humidity, and plant or biotic composition and makeup may be different, and which can greatly provide additional benefits to the plants and animals living in, or utilizing them. Micro-habitats such as these can often help provide shelter and refuge from the outer elements, provide additional food sources (whether directly or indirectly, such as attracting rodents for snakes to eat), help them thermoregulate and maintain their preferred optimal body temperatures, and also to help them digest their food, gestate their eggs or young when gravid, incubate and shelter their eggs or young once laid or deposited, and other metabolic or physiological functions.

**A more commercially available humid hide, from Zilla Products.*

When it comes to keeping our pet amphibians and reptiles in captivity, providing this "micro-environment" can be an equally as important, yet oftentimes overlooked aspect to their proper care and husbandry. Conditions which are too wet or humid overall can lead to bacterial or fungal infections, or the potential of respiratory infections, while conditions which are too dry can lead to dehydration and dessication, shedding difficulties, or respiratory infections as well. Many species of reptiles and amphibians kept in captivity, from common to rare or uncommon alike, can benefit greatly from a humid hide, including ball pythons, crested geckos, leopard geckos, corn snakes, boa constrictors, and even bearded dragons and many others!

So how does one go about making or creating a "humid hide" box, or similarly, a nesting or lay box for ovoviviparous species to be able to lay their eggs? As it turns out, doing so can be quite simple and relatively inexpensive with just a few of the right materials and methods. While some humid hides, or other products have been manufactured or have become commercially available over the last few years, this educational tutorial will focus on the more DIY, or Do-it-Yourself, ways to create a humidity hide or nesting lay box, which could help one save some of the costs.

So without further adue, here is a DIY tutorial on how you can make your own humidity hide, or nesting box for your egg-laying species of snakes or other reptiles!

Materials Needed:


**Examples of Clear and Transparent, or Opaque Humid Hides/Nesting Boxes which can be used. © Marvelous Skinks and Pythons & Pets.*

(1). Suitably sized plastic shoe-box or other plastic container with a top or lid. This container should be large enough for the animal to comfortably fit within with at least four sides of their body being able to touch each of the four sides within, or slightly greater, to allow the animal some movement and ability to turn around within the container. The container should also be of a suitable size to be able to fit within the animal's primary enclosure, and should generally be placed on the "warmer" or heated end of the thermal gradient within the enclosure.

-Opaque or non-transparent containers provide the greatest amount of darkness and security for the animal, but it also depends on the species and even individual animal. Some animals may be more sensitive or secretive to surrounding disturbances, while other animals may be less so, to where a clearer or more transparent container may be used.

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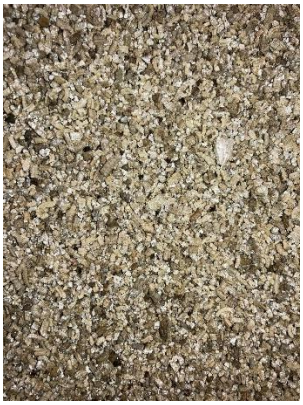
(1) Soldering Iron Tool, Scissors, or Other Cutting Device. A soldering iron tool, pair of heavy duty scissors, or other cutting device can then be used to cut and create a hole in the humidity or nesting lay box.



**Vermiculite, Perlite, and Spaghnum Moss are some of the most commonly used Humidity hide, or Lay Box substrates.*

(1)-Bag of suitable substrate medium to be laid and spread out on the inside floor of the box or container.

Directions:

Step 1: With your selected box or container, use the soldering iron or other cutting tool to make a suitably sized hole on the top or side of the container. This hole should be roughly slightly larger than the greatest or widest diameter of the animal using the hide, in order to allow them easy of entry and exit. A soldering iron tool may, perhaps be the best tool to use in order to create smooth edges around the hole and cut area so that the animal cannot possibly cut or scrape itself while utilizing the hide.

-Depending on one's needs and preferences, the entry/exit way can be created along one side of the container, or on top through the lid. Creating the hole on the side can provide greater ease of access, and further limit light from entering the hide, at least from directly above, but this design also makes it easier to allow for the animal to drag outside the substrate medium used within the hide. Likewise, a hole created on top of the container can also provide ease of access, depending on the animal, and can help limit the loss of substrate medium within, but can also allow for greater light penetration within. Both orientations can have their advantages and disadvantages, so it is really up to each individual to determine which orientation may work best.

-Also, only one hole or entry/exit-way should be needed in most circumstances, unless the hide is large enough to where too much heat and humidity loss from within is not a concern.

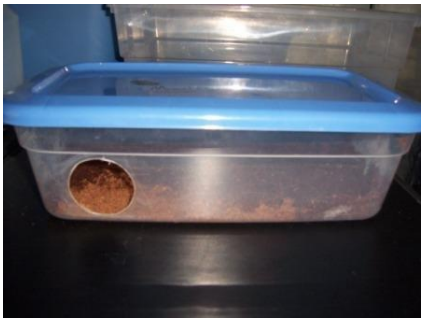
Step 2: Add the Substrate Medium. There can be many different types of substrates that can be used for a humidity, or nesting box depending on the species and their requirements, as well as one's ambient and enclosure temperatures, humidity, and gradients. The substrate used should retain some moisture and humidity well, and not be too prone to drying out. Substrate should be at least a few inches deep to allow your reptile to dig in it, or to burrow down into it, as well as provide a buffer medium for any eggs laid or deposited. Some of the most commonly used

substrate mediums for a humidity box or laying box can include dampened paper towel, vermiculite, Perlite, and/or Spaghnum moss, and it also doesn't hurt to mix these substrates as well. Also do not worry if the entire bag ends up not being used. Any remaining substrate can simply be stored away.

Maintaining the Humidity Box or Egg Laying Box

Once your humidity box, or egg laying box has been set up and all furnished, maintaining it should be fairly simple, with only a few issues to watch for and correct, if need be.

-If the substrate inside the box becomes too consistently wet or moist: Some condensation should be able to be seen on the inside of the container, but it, and the substrate, should not be sopping wet (unless a specific species requires these conditions). If this is the case, add additional holes or ventilation to the box or container to allow for greater airflow and evaporation, or just simply remove the box or container from the enclosure and discard the old substrate.



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-If the substrate inside the box becomes too dry: Additional water can be added to the substrate medium, or be sprayed or misted, and then mixed into the substrate medium, but ensure that it does not become too wet or moist.

-A temperature and humidity probe, or hygrometer can also be set up and installed (see how to do so in creating a reptile incubator) for the humidity box or nesting box, but usually isn't required unless one desires, or if more precise and critical temperatures and humidity levels are needed to be maintained.

Congratulations! You should now have set up your working humidity hide box or nesting lay box for your reptile or amphibian!