



**Photo Credit: Shahriza Shahrudin*

Radiated Ratsnake *(Coelognathus radiatus)*

Old World Arboreals

Radiated ratsnakes medium sized to large, Old World ratsnake species that are also known as the “copperhead racer”, “copperhead trinket snake”, or “copperhead trinket racer”. This is a medium sized to large, arboreal to semi-arboreal colubrid species with a ground color of brown, reddish-brown, to yellowish or grayish-yellow with four (4) bold, dark longitudinal stripes on the anterior third of the body, grading into a faded, pale colored dorsal stripe/series of longitudinal stripes and faint, rhombic shaped lateral blotches. The head is fairly small and narrow, with large eyes, and several dark post-ocular stripes present. As with other ratsnake species, radiated ratsnakes are strong and agile climbers, often ascending trees, shrubs, barns, and other outbuildings in search of shelter and/or food in the form of small reptiles, birds, eggs, and mammals. This species can be irascible and defensive when disturbed, rapidly vibrating their tail tips, musking and defecating, and/or coiling into a defensive strike posture. Nonetheless, radiated ratsnakes are a hardy and easily maintained species in captivity.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Serpentes

Infraorder: Alethinophidia

Family: Colubridae

Subfamily: Colubrinae

Genus: Coelognathus

Species: *Coelognathus radiatus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, radiated ratsnakes can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

Radiated ratsnakes are a medium sized to large, semi arboreal colubrid species found in southern

to southeastern Asia, including Bangladesh, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam. Within this range, this species tends to be a nocturnal to crepuscular, arboreal to semi-arboreal species found in the tropical forests and woodlands, agricultural areas and farmland, and grasslands within the above range, most often near water sources such as irrigated croplands, rivers and streams, ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water.

Origin/History

Coelognathus radiatus (F. Boie, 1827).

Radiated ratsnakes seem to have no specific history in herpetoculture, having been imported and captive-bred in small numbers for a number of decades.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced.

Size

Radiated ratsnakes are large species, ranging from 8 to 12 inches as hatchlings, and typically 4 to 7 ½ feet as adults, or approximately 48 to 90 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Arboreal. Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Hatchling radiated ratsnakes can be housed in a 10 to 20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult radiated ratsnakes should be housed in a minimum of a 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Radiated ratsnakes are semi-arboreal, but floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that can enable burrowing or hiding such as fine aspen shavings, cypress mulch, or coconut fibers. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide additional basking and hiding opportunities using live or artificial foliage, rocks, logs, driftwood, or other hides. Also be sure to include a sturdy water bowl or dish as well.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized UTH (or tank heating pad), ceramic or radiant heat emitter, or incandescent, UVA/UVB, or other heat producing bulb. Ideal temperatures for radiated ratsnakes range from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and 80 to 88 degrees F on the warm side. Most species of snakes have fairly simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Radiated ratsnakes require moderate levels of overall humidity, and should be maintained at, or within about 50 to 75%, with additional humid hides or retreats to assist with shedding and overall health.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Carnivorous; In the wild, radiated ratsnakes are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, bird eggs, smaller amphibians and reptiles, and other smaller vertebrates. Hatchlings and juveniles will also occasionally eat smaller frogs, lizards, or other reptiles. In captivity, radiated ratsnakes can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice, although some may require scenting with lizards or frogs. In most circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed rodents acquired from a reputable source, as offering live rodents to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake

when the rodent bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder rodent sizes for your snake is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the snake's widest point. It should also be noted that many snakes may refuse food for longer periods of time over several weeks or months, especially in the fall and winter months or if several other husbandry conditions are not being met. While this can be alarming to new pet owners, it is oftentimes normal, but their overall health and weight should be monitored during these times to make sure they do not lose weight or otherwise deteriorate. Most snakes typically are fed whole prey items, and do not usually require additional calcium or vitamin D3 supplementation unless otherwise directed. Their feeding frequency will also depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Radiated ratsnakes are well-known for being a very defensive species, often coiling the front third of their bodies into a defensive "S" posture, and inflating their necks while gaping and tail rattling/wagging when disturbed or threatened. This is a species that requires very confident care and handling, perhaps best provided by the more intermediate to advanced enthusiast. With gentle, deliberate, and confident handling, however, radiated ratsnakes can be handled, and over time, can become more tolerant of handling. As with most snakes, hatchlings and juveniles can often be more nervous and prone to be nippy, although adults can still be somewhat nervous and flighty as well.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

*Copyright, 2023