



*Photo Credit: NinjaJournalist.com

Yellow Anaconda (*Eunectes notaeus*)

A Smaller Relative

Yellow anacondas are a large, heavy bodied aquatic to semi aquatic boa species. Although they are a smaller relative of the larger and more well-known green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*), yellow anacondas are still a heavy bodied snake with a yellow, brownish yellow, to olive yellow ground color with a pattern of larger and darker dorsal saddles, blotches, and streaks. Several dark stripes radiate from the head, and the eyes are fairly high set. As with the green anaconda, yellow anacondas are largely aquatic to semi aquatic ambush predators, using the water to support their weight. While certainly not for everyone, both species of anacondas, the green and yellow, which are most commonly available, have indeed earned their place among advanced reptile lovers and enthusiasts seeking more challenging large constrictor species to maintain and enjoy! It is also important to keep in mind that yellow anacondas and other large constrictor species are a controlled, regulated, or prohibited species in some states. Always check any applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances that may pertain to the specific possession of this species.

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: Boidae

Subfamily: Boinae

Genus: *Eunectes*

Species: *Eunectes notaeus**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, yellow anacondas can attain longevity of 20 to 25 years or more, although up to 30 to 40 years is not unheard of.

Distribution and Habitat

The yellow anaconda is a medium to large species of aquatic to semi-aquatic boa indigenous to a wide range of South America. More specifically, this species occurs from Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and western and southern Brazil, and to northeastern Argentina. Within this range, yellow anacondas occupy terrestrial to primarily semi-aquatic environments, including swamps, marshes, and brushy or well vegetated banks and margins of slow moving rivers, streams, and river or stream drainages and basins. Yellow anacondas can also be found in forested or seasonally flooded grasslands, savannahs, or wetlands, and irrigated or otherwise wet agricultural areas, plantations, or cultivated areas near human habitations.

Origin/History

Eunectes notaeus Cope, 1862.

Yellow anacondas have been kept in zoological collections and the pet trade for at least several decades, although information and documentation as to when they were first kept or imported is lacking. These smaller relatives of the green anaconda (*E. murinus*) would be imported at least since the 1980's or 1990's, and would also occasionally be bred in captivity in several color and pattern morphs and mutations.

In 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would prohibit the importation of yellow anacondas (and ultimately 7 other boa and python species) into the U.S. under the injurious wildlife listing of the Lacey Act, citing invasive species issues with the well-documented Burmese python (and other species), and thus only captive-bred specimens became available in the continental U.S.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced.

Size

Yellow anacondas range from about 18 to 24 inches as neonates. Adult yellow anacondas are smaller than their green anaconda cousins, and usually range from 9 to 12 feet, or about 108 to 144 inches. They are still not for beginners, **and always be sure to consider the potential adult size and long term commitment of keeping and housing a yellow anaconda or any other large snake prior to obtaining one as part of being a responsible reptile or other pet owner!**

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Terrestrial to Semi-Aquatic. Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Neonate to juvenile yellow anacondas can be started out in a 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but will soon require larger accommodations. If glass enclosures are used at any point, be sure that the enclosure retains sufficient humidity. Many of the commercially made plastic or fiberglass enclosures, or otherwise custom-designed enclosures that can retain heat and humidity well are perhaps the best and most practical enclosures to use to house mid to large sized boas and pythons. Depending on the age and size of the animal, a minimum of a six to eight foot by three foot enclosure or larger is required. Yellow anacondas can be maintained on a substrate of cage liner material, cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, or sphagnum fir mixtures, but always ensure that the substrate does not become too damp or moist. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Being largely semi aquatic, anacondas will also require a large sturdy water dish or tub they can readily enter and exit, and that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed frequently, especially if dirtied. Providing an adequately sized hidebox, artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, logs, and other cage furnishings can also provide additional hiding and basking opportunities.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a thermal gradient, or a warm side, in the 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 yellow anacondas range from 75 to 82 degrees F on the cool side and 85 to 92 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.

Providing adequate humidity is also important in maintaining anacondas. Yellow anacondas are more tolerant of and less susceptible to husbandry issues associated with lower humidity levels than green anacondas, but still require at relative humidity levels of least 70 to 80% humidity, with access to humid hides or retreats to help with shedding and overall health. Using the correct substrate, as well as providing a humid hide box with sphagnum moss will help maintain desired humidity levels. Overall, the enclosure should be maintained at humid levels but not be wet or moist since this leads to other health related implications. 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.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Carnivorous; In the wild, yellow anacondas are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small to large mammals, birds, and other reptiles that they can ambush and consume. In captivity, yellow anacondas can be given feeder rodents or rabbits of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. Larger feeder or prey items for large snakes such as large rabbits, and even poultry, pigs, and other pre-killed livestock can also often be obtained through alternative means through local wholesalers, meat, or agricultural suppliers in one's area. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed prey animals acquired from a reputable source, as offering live animals to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the prey item bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder prey item 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. Yellow anacondas can also be finicky eaters amongst the large constrictors, especially those of wild caught or questionable origin and history. In these cases, other food items may need to be tried or more secure hiding opportunities provided. While these things can be alarming, 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

Both species of anacondas maintained in captivity (yellow anaconda and the green anaconda) require previous knowledge and experience in handling larger, and/or sometimes aggressive and/or unpredictable snakes. The origin of the animal chosen (wild caught vs. captive born), as well as the frequency and methods of how they are kept and handled will often determine to a great extent the disposition of anacondas to being handled. Despite their often negative

widespread reputation for being nasty or unpredictable, captive bred and born yellow anacondas that are handled regularly from an early age can become traceable and more easily handled. Be aware though that they can bite from any angle or direction. Anacondas certainly are not for everyone (only experienced and responsible individuals), but with the correct husbandry and handling, can make for a rewarding reptile keeping experience for the right individuals.

****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

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