

Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society
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Common Name: Kingsnakes

Scientific Name: *Lampropeltis spp.*

Native to: North America (excluding Canada)

Size: 3-4 feet average up to 6 feet

Life Span: 10-15 years

General Appearance: Head is small and not distinct from the body. They are smooth scaled with a variety of colors and patterns. Kingsnakes are constrictors and are usually active at dawn and dusk.

Housing Requirements:

Enclosure: Glass aquariums are good to use and are easy to clean. Plastic shoeboxes can also be used. Hatchlings can be housed in 10-gallon enclosures. Adults should be housed in 20- gallon enclosures or larger depending on size of the snake. A secure lid is essential or the snake will escape. Kingsnakes must be housed alone because they will eat other snakes.

Temperature: 75-85 F.

Heat/Light: Heating pads placed under one half of the enclosure are the best way to provide heat. This will give the snake a range of temperature to move within. Aquarium glass can draw heat away from the animal. Be sure to place a thermometer inside to measure correct temperature. Additional UV lighting is not needed for snakes. An incandescent basking light can be used during the day.

Substrates: Newspaper is inexpensive and easily changed when soiled. Other Choices are aspen shavings, outdoor carpeting or aquarium gravel which are more attractive to look at. A shelter or hide box is needed so the snake has a dark area to rest and feel secure. A rock or branch should be included to give an abrasive spot for the snake to rub upon to help with shedding.

Environment: In periods of low humidity a weekly misting is needed.

Diet: Hatchlings can be started off feeding on pinkie mice. Juveniles and adults can gradually take larger prey of fuzzy mice, adult mice or young rats. Young snakes can be fed 1-2 times a week. Thawed frozen rodents are the easiest and safest way to feed snakes. A supply can be kept in your freezer and there are no problems from live mice biting your snake. Water should be provided in a bowl. The snake will drink from it and may soak itself before it sheds.

Maintenance: Cleanliness of the enclosure is essential. Waste products should be moved daily. Bowls must be clean with fresh water. Handlers are advised to wash their hands after holding any animals or animal related products.

Other References or Recommended Readings

The General Care and Maintenance of Common Kingsnakes ~ David Perlowin