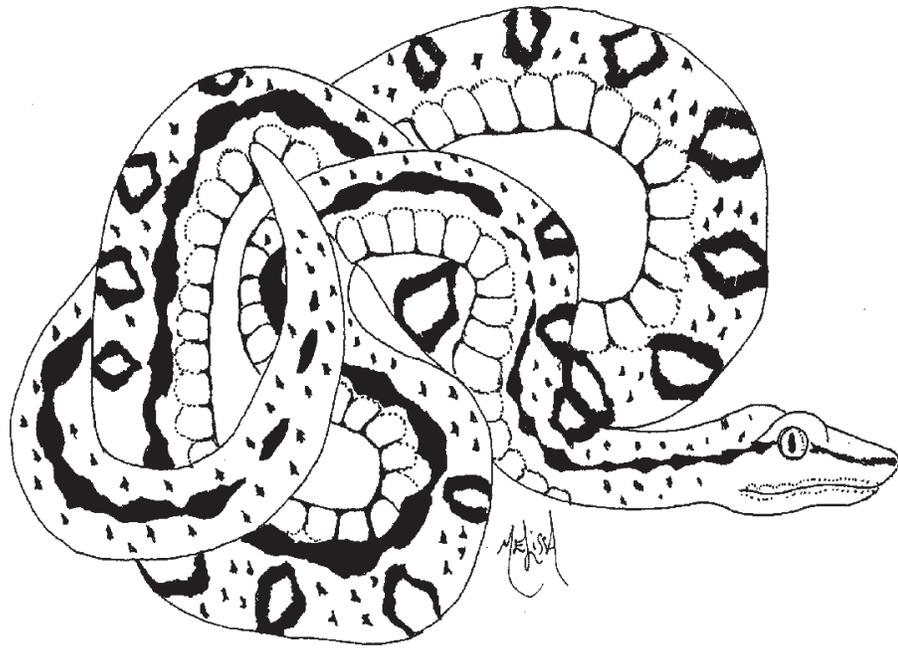




Endangered Species of The Bahamas



Artwork by Melissa Maura

BAHAMIAN BOA CONSTRICTOR

SCIENTIFIC NAME

There are three species of boa constrictors (fowl snakes) found in The Bahamas. Regionally, *Epicrates exul* is found on the Little Bahama Bank, *Epicrates striatus* on the Great Bahama Bank and *Epicrates chrysogaster* in the southern Bahamas.

DESCRIPTION

Boas are reptiles. They are cold-blooded animals with a skin that feels smooth and wax like. Boas are gray brown in color with striking regular patterns in dark gray or black along the length of their body. If allowed to reach maturity, the Bahamian boa constrictor can reach lengths of 6 to 8 feet.

DIET

Young boas live in trees and shrubs and feed on anole lizards found there. Adult boas feed on frogs, birds and rats: If allowed to live a full life, a Bahamian boa can consume thousands of rats. The Bahamian boa is non-venomous and subdues its prey by enveloping it with its body and suffocating it. Once dead, the boa swallows the prey whole.

REPRODUCTION

Copulation (mating) occurs between February and May and birth occurs between August and November. Boas are viviparous meaning they bear live young. Litter size (the number of young born at the same time) can range from 1 to 50!

HABITAT

Bahamian boa constrictors are found on all the major islands except Grand Bahama and San Salvador. They are arboreal meaning they live in trees or forested areas.

STATUS

The Convention for International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) lists the Bahamian boa constrictor in Appendix II meaning it is a species which is threatened and stands to become endangered.

THREATS

The major threat to Bahamian boa constrictors is man. Many people fear these harmless creatures. This fear is unwarranted since our boa constrictors do not have venom so their bite is not poisonous, Hysterical persecution is caused mainly by ignorance and superstitious fear. Habit destruction and collection for sale as pets are other threats facing this endangered Bahamian species.

INTERESTING FACTS

- The Ragged Island boa constrictor *Epicrates striatus mccraniei* was not described until 1957.
- The Crooked Island and Acklins Island fowl snake *Epicrates chrysogaster schwartzi* has never been collected alive.
- Boa constrictors shed their skins. Their cast off skins, looking like rumpled tubes of cellophane, can often be found hanging from trees.



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