

The Maintenance and Reproduction of the DWARF PYTHON OF ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA

by
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There are few things more exciting to herpetoculturists than receiving some new taxon of reptile or amphibian, especially some particularly coveted animal, one of the "dream species" that we each hold in our fantasies. Raising these animals to maturity and then to successful reproduction is one of the most rewarding experiences that any with our interests can accomplish. And regardless of the species, the success of any such project speaks an eloquent testament to the dedication, patience, and sometimes the luck of the person who is able to raise and propagate the animals in his or her care.

Our own "dream species" have all seemed unattainable to us, fantasy crea-

tures impossible to acquire, some impossible even to experience. While not all of the creatures of our daydreams are boas or pythons, certainly it is that group that in recent years has been foremost in our thoughts. The pythons and boas of our fantasies are a rare bunch.

Some day we hope just to see one of the preserved specimens of *Corallus cropanii*, the terrestrial relative of the emerald tree boa from coastal São Paulo state in southeastern Brazil, a boa so rare that it has no common name. Only three specimens are known since its description, and it is said by some to have gone extinct in the 40 years or so since its discovery. A living captive specimen, or even better (since we're fantasizing,) several captive young sexed pairs of this species makes a superior boa fantasy.

Some day we hope to see a living specimen of the rough-scaled python, *Morelia carinata*, an Australian python known to science since 1981; only four specimens are reported. We once traveled to Western Australia to see the only two preserved specimens, deposited in the Western Australia Museum in Perth. What a fantastic python it is, too! It is likely the python species with the smallest distribution in nature, apparently restricted to perhaps as few as a half dozen separated patches of monsoon forest in the bottoms of canyons, and tiny islands of forest surrounded by harsh dry rocky country, each patch smaller than 10 acres. This is a species that desperately needs the establishment of a well-managed captive population, but that's a fantasy that will have to happen in Australia.



The eggs of dwarf pythons are huge. Normally the female coils about the eggs, completely covering them. Here the female has been disturbed to reveal the eggs.

