

Mandarin Rat Snake

Elaphe mandarina

Class: Reptilia **Order:** Squamata **Suborder:** Serpentes **Family:** Colubridae

Other names: none

Other Subspecies:

Other Relatives: closely related to *Euprepiophis conspicillatus*, the Japanese forest rat snake.

Rat snakes are found northern hemisphere, with 50 species of Asian ratsnakes [1]



Zoo Rat Snake 1.0

'Xiao' 1.0- male

DOH: 9/3/2004 Aq: 7/20/2009

About Xiao

Xiao was acquired in 2009 from Colorado Springs/Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, he was hatched at Houston Zoo. Xiao weighs 1 lb. 7 oz.

Status

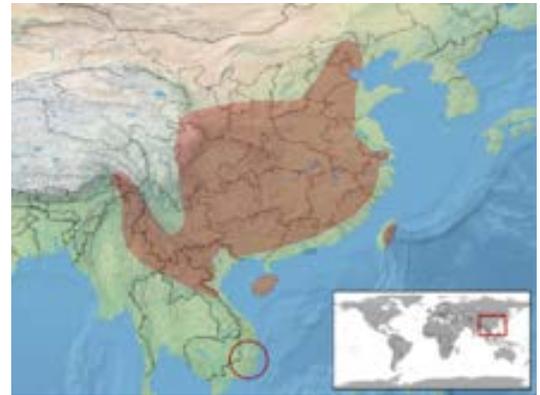
Not evaluated; Least Concern [2]

Geographic Region

They come from rocky forests and farmlands within China, Taiwan, Burma, and Vietnam where the climate is fairly cool and humid [3].

Habitat

Rain forests, farmland, areas with dense vegetation, grasses, shrubs, rocky areas and rice fields [2]. It occurs from sea level to at least 3,000 m (9,800 ft), and therefore are more tolerant of cooler temperatures [4]. Typical temperatures range between 68-77° F [5]



Characteristics

Size: 4' or less [4], 39 to 78 inches [2] and about 1 pound [2]

Longevity: Wild unknown; **Captivity** 10-15 years [3]

Physical Description

- The snake's upper head is yellow and the **labials** are white, except for three broad, black cross-bands [2].
- Its upper body and tail are purplish-gray or even reddish, with a series of conspicuous, yellow-margined, yellow-centered, black saddles separated from one another by length of one to two scales [2].
- They stay slender throughout their lives [3].

Dimorphism

There is no obvious secondary sexual characteristic that allow for instant determination of sex, as sizes of individuals can vary greatly and there is no conspicuous color variation.

Males:

Females:

Behavior

- *Crepuscular*, active at dawn and dusk [4]
- Mandarin rat snakes are comfortable in cooler temperatures than most other **colubrids**.

Defense Mechanisms

- Shy, secretive snakes.
- During the day, Mandarin rat snakes like to hide in dark places like rodent burrows [4]. This is also typically where they hunt.
- When disturbed, they become very aggressive and may spit, musk or bite the attacker.

Reproduction

- **Oviparous**, egg-laying
- They breed in the spring, 3-12 eggs requiring 48-55 days of incubation [2].

Diet: Carnivore

Nonvenomous constrictor

Diet In the Wild: small rodents [4] and birds [2]
Diet In the Zoo: 2-3 small mice, every other week

Conservation

- **Use & Trade:** Exports of this species from China historically have been difficult to keep alive. This species has very specific requirements for housing, including low temperatures, high humidity, and substrate for burrowing. Due to this, unfortunately many wild caught exports have perished at the hands of inept caretakers [6].
- **Threats:** Their habitat is slowly being reduced due to land development, human encroachment and the cutting of trees. However, at this time, it is assumed they continue to maintain a healthy population (their population has not been thoroughly evaluated).
- Due to people's lack of knowledge and fear of snakes, rat snakes continue to be the victim of human persecution.
- **Predators:** larger reptiles and carnivorous mammals and birds.

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Their bright colors and diamond pattern may look dangerous, but they're nonvenomous and actually very secretive, active only around dawn or dusk in heavily-covered areas. [3]
- Mandarin rat snakes are uncommon and not usually kept as pets [3].
- Rat snakes are very useful around barns and in farming communities because they help control pest populations.

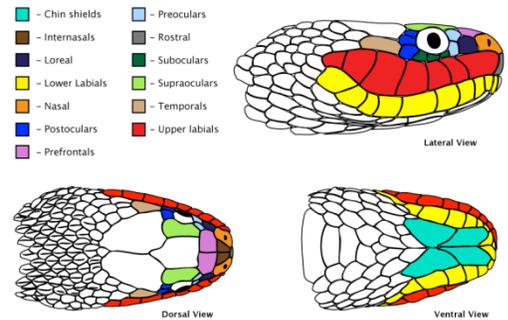
Glossary: List of definitions of the most important recurrent technical terms used in the text.

Colubrids-a family of snakes, composed of 304 genera and 1,938 species. Most are nonvenomous.

Labials- The labial scales are the scales of snakes and other scaled reptiles that border the mouth opening. (see picture at right)

Oviparous- refers to animals that lay eggs, with little or no other embryonic development within the mother.

Head Scales Used in Key



References

- [1] Ratsnake Foundation, "Ratsnakes," Ratsnake Foundation, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ratsnakefoundation.org/index.php/ratsnake-species>. [Accessed October 2014].
- [2] Detroit Zoo, "Mandarin Rat Snake," Detroit Zoo, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.detroitzoo.org/animals/mandarin-rat-snake>. [Accessed October 2014].
- [3] Reptiles Magazine, "Mandarin Rat Snake," Reptiles Magazine, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.reptilesmagazine.com/Care-Sheets/Mandarin-Rat-Snake-Care-Sheet/>. [Accessed October 2014].
- [4] Wikipedia, "Mandarin Rat Snake," Wikipedia, 2014. [Online]. Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euprepiophis_mandarinus. [Accessed October 2014].
- [5] Ratsnake Foundation, "Euprepiophis Mandarinus," Ratsnake Foundation, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ratsnakefoundation.org/index.php/ratsnake-species/asian-ratsnakes/82-euprepiophis-mandarinus>. [Accessed October 2014].
- [6] ZooLogic, "Mandarin Rat Snake," Zoo Logic, 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://www.zoo-logic.co.uk/mandarinratsnakes.html>. [Accessed October 2014].