

NOTES ON THE BREEDING OF COMMON SAND BOA *GONGYLOPHIS CONICUS* (SCHNEIDER, 1801)

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On 28 May 2007 at 1200hr a snake was rescued by one of us (Yogendra Satam) from the edge of a scrub forest near Police Training Centre, Marol, Mumbai. It was identified as the Common Sand Boa *Gongylophis conicus* (Schneider, 1801) (Image 1^w). The snake was sluggish and on closer observation we found its belly exceptionally bulged. We kept this snake in a glass tank measuring 0.914 x 0.610 x 0.610m for further observations. As the snake is a burrower, the base of the tank was provided with loose soil. The total length of this snake was 835mm and tail length was 47mm. A live field mouse offered was killed (by strangulation), but it was not consumed by the snake.

On 3 June 2007 around 0930hr the snake started to give birth, and hence, the tank was left undisturbed. We checked the tank on the next morning around 1000hr and found the female with seven babies including one dead on the surface. We also recovered another 16 babies from loose soil provided in the tank (Image 2^w). The juveniles were kept in a plastic box (0.305m x 0.152m x 0.076m) with sand. Holes were made on the lid of the plastic box for ventilation.

The first shedding of skin for most of the babies occurred within first 24 hours. The babies measured from 220 to 243mm (Table 1). A total of 27 geckos (*Hemidactylus brookii* & *Hemidactylus flaviviridis*, ranging in size from ca. 30-70mm) were released in the box on 5 June of which only three were consumed by the baby snakes. The female and the baby snakes were released back to the wild in the nearby area.

Gongylophis conicus is ovoviviparous and reported to give birth to 6-8 young (Smith, 1943; Whitaker & Captain, 2004). Daniel (2002) reported a female with six large (about 2.5cm) eggs in December, a female with 16 eggs in January, and a female delivering seven babies in captivity measuring ca. 80mm in June. Minton (1966) reports a female (670mm) giving birth to a single baby on July 11, and another female (710mm) to 11 young on July 21, and the babies measured 190-225mm. According to Khaire (2006) 7-9 young are delivered at a time and are about 80mm length. Thus there is a significant variation in breeding season, number of babies delivered and size of the babies/juveniles, the present information on *Gongylophis conicus* giving birth to 23 babies (Image 3^w) is noteworthy.

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Table 1. Morphometry of baby *Gongylophis conicus* (in mm)

	Total length	Tail length
1.	225	14
2.	225	15
3.	230	23
4.	230	22
5.	220	20
6.	225	25
7.	235	23
8.	230	23
9.	223	20
10.	235	25
11.	233	20
12.	225	13
13.	235	20
14.	240	22
15.	240	23
16.	235	20
17.	235	25
18.	235	22
19.	243	22
20.	225	20
21.	240	20
22.	231	22



^w See Images in the web supplement at www.zoosprint.org