

# Puerto Rican Boa

*Epicrates inornatus*

Reptile

## Scientific Name

*Epicrates inornatus*

## Other Names

Culebrón

## Range

Northwestern Puerto Rico

## Habitat

Forests, wooden foothills and caves

## Average Size

Length: 6 – 7 ft.

Weight: 2 lbs.

## Description

Large, heavy bodied snake ranging in color from tan to dark brown with dark blotches down the length of the back

## Lifespan

In the wild: Unknown

In captivity: Up to 20 years

## Diet

In the wild: Rats, mice and bats

In captivity: Mice

## Offspring

23 – 32 live young

## Gestation

6 months

## Sexual Maturity

2 – 3 years

## Predators

Birds, introduced mammals and humans

## Population Status

Endangered



## Behavior

The Puerto Rican boa can be found in the trees or on the ground. It is reputedly an aggressive snake that will readily defend itself with a bite. During the daylight hours, they bask in the sun or stay camouflaged in the foliage. As it becomes dusk, they begin to forage for food. They have been observed hanging on the tree branches outside of caves, waiting for bats to take flight so they can grab them in mid air. They are excellent swimmers seen in both fresh and salt water, although they do not stay in the briny depths for any length of time.

## Reproduction and Breeding

Like all boas, the Puerto Rican boa bears live young (viviparous). Mating begins at the beginning of the wet season in late April or May. Only one clutch is produced annually. Neither parent provides any parental care, leaving the offspring to fend for themselves. The young, unable to catch large prey, hunt for small reptiles and invertebrates.

## Conservation

Island species are more vulnerable to conservation concerns due to their inability to migrate to more suitable habitat, breed with neighboring populations to prevent inbreeding, and are forced to cope with natural disasters such as fires and floods. The Puerto Rican boa is no exception, with loss of habitat and pollution from nearby human populations as conservation concerns.

As far back as the 1700's, oil from this snake's fat was a key export from the island. Hunting for food and skins also played a role in their population decline. An expedition in 1900 could not find any individuals to collect. Although accidental introduction of non-native species, especially the mongoose, has been linked to this species' decline, no concrete evidence of this has been documented. Currently, this snake is protected by the government and it is illegal to use them for any commercial purpose. There are some cases of native people hunting them for the oil for folk remedies. Many islanders, however, appreciate the presence of this snake to help keep pest populations down in their villages.



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### Amazing Facts

Only three families of snakes live on the island of Puerto Rico!

This is the largest native species of snake to the island!

The Puerto Rican boa is the only boa known to catch bats in mid-air!

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