



All About the

California Kingsnake

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The California Kingsnake

About the California Kingsnake

The California Kingsnake, scientifically known as *Lampropeltis getula californiae*, is found in the southwestern United States from California eastward to Arizona. They are common in a variety of habitats and often caught and kept as pets by youngsters. With attractive patterns and very easy care, these reptiles are quickly becoming a pet of choice. This particular snake makes an excellent classroom pet as they are easy to care for, have an excellent temperament, are reasonably priced and readily available at many pet stores.

Average Length	3-4 feet	Characteristics	Nocturnal, shed skin several times each year.
Average Lifespan	20-30 years	Special Needs	Heat lamp, humidity control
Coloring	All colors	Health Concerns	Prone to parasites and ticks; respiratory infections, mouth rot, blister disease



- [Health Care for Your Kingsnake](#)
- [Food for Your Kingsnake](#)

Kingsnake Characteristics

Kingsnakes are among the nicest pet snakes, and they have a gentle, easy going nature. These snakes are rarely aggressive, and even when provoked they prefer to find a way to escape safely rather than biting the attacker. Approximately 8 to 10 inches long at birth, these snakes average 3 to 4 feet at maturity. Remember to handle your snake gently, not pinching it, and let it slide through your fingers.

Selecting Your Kingsnake

Before you acquire an exotic animal of any kind, it is important to research and read about its care. As the interest in owning reptiles has increased over the last several years, many books and pamphlets have been produced to help potential new owners discover what species is right for them.

This particular snake is quite easy to breed in captivity, so there is a wide variety available from breeders. If you are residing in California or Oregon, your selection might be as simple as checking out what is in your back yard.

Select a snake that is responsive when handled. Consider not only the overall look of the snake, but also its current living conditions; this will give you an indication of how well it is currently being cared for. Don't hesitate to ask the pet shop owner to throw some food in with any snake that you are considering; if it immediately goes after the food, that snake might be the one for you. Be sure to only select a snake from a pet shop or breeder in which all animals appear to be healthy and well cared for. Some things to look for:

- full and plump bodies
- healthy skin with sleek scales
- bright and clear eyes



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Selecting Your Kingsnake's Habitat

When selecting your reptile's habitat, it is important to consider several things such as, what type and size is appropriate, substrate, temperature, light, furniture, and what type of feeding accommodations are necessary.

Type and Size of Your Kingsnake's Habitat

Juvenile Kingsnakes can start out in a small plastic shoebox or a Desert Den set up. If you have a large number of small snakes, this is the most convenient way of housing your collection. If you don't have a large collection, house your Kingsnakes individually in 10 gallon cages to start. As they grow and require more room, you can move them into 20 gallon "long" tanks. A breeding pair can fit comfortably in one 20 gallon tank, if you want to house pairs together. The cage will need to have a secure lid, with a locking clip, as these animals can be great escape artists. Some individuals will roam the cage repeatedly, looking for a way out, and rubbing their noses along the edge of the lid until they find a weakness. California Kingsnakes should always have a hide box, and a small water dish available at all times.

These snakes do well with a temperature of gradient of 75 to 85 degrees. Make sure one side of the cage is on the warmer end of the spectrum, and the other side is on the cooler end. By doing this, the snake is able to regulate themselves properly. Make sure the tank has adequate ventilation to make sure excess humidity does not build up.

The California Kingsnake does not require many cage accessories, and a simple arrangement will be easiest to clean and maintain. Rocks and branches are not necessary, but you may add them to the cage to make it aesthetically pleasing to look at. Your Kingsnake will use a large rock to hide behind and will also use it to rub against to help aid in the shedding of its skin.

Habitat Care and Maintenance

Any debris and feces should be removed from the tank on a daily basis. Folded paper towel or newspaper can be placed in the toilet area and removed as soon as it is soiled.

Maintaining a happy and healthy habitat for your snake can be generally easy, as long as you keep up with it. Regularly change your substrate to assure and maintain good health.

Feeding

All Kingsnakes will take small rodents (rats and mice), and some will eat other snakes. Hatchling California Kingsnakes eat pinkie mice to start. As the snake grows larger, increase the number of pinkies fed, and then increase the size of the prey item. Adults can easily take several grown mice at one feeding. Feed hatchlings every three to five days, and adults once a week. If your snake does not immediately start to eat its dinner, leave the pre-killed rodent in the cage for about an hour or two. If the snake continues to ignore the rodent, then remove it from the cage and try again in a few days. Do not try to force the snake to eat.



[Reptile Habitat](#)

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The Kingsnake Baby

At this stage of your Kingsnake's life, starting them out properly will ensure that you keep a happy and healthy Kingsnake for the span of their life. When you first bring your baby Kingsnake home, leave it alone for a few weeks so it can adjust to its surroundings and to curb any stress it may feel. You should feed your baby Kingsnake mice every 5-7 days and prey that has been pre-killed is suggested. They will shed about every four to six weeks during their growing years. It takes 7-10 days for your Kingsnake to shed its skin.

The Kingsnake Adult

As your Kingsnake grows, their needs change. You will want to be sure your adult Kingsnake has adjusted to their surrounding. Adult Kingsnakes will feed off of rats every 10-14 days. As they get older, their shedding will be done a few times a year. Keep plenty of water around for your Kingsnake so they can re-hydrate themselves and ensure they are properly being taken care of.

The Senior Kingsnake

As you go through the years with your Kingsnake, you will want to ensure they are comfortable, kept warm, adhering to their diets, and maintaining their light source. Annual visits to a veterinarian who specializes in reptiles are essential in ensuring that your Kingsnake stays healthy for years to come.

Medical Considerations

When kept in optimum conditions, the California Kingsnake is an incredibly healthy pet and has no medical consideration, other than the possibility of bacterial growth in their cage if it is not cleaned properly.

Necessary Items

When you initially bring your new snake home, you only need the basics; an aquarium with paper towel or newspaper across the bottom, a basking area and a feeding area and a method for feeding planned.

As you and your new snake become accustomed to one another, you will key in on their likes and dislikes; you can then begin adding new things to their habitat and daily routine.



[Reptile Habitat Kit](#)



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