
KEEPING AND BREEDING *ELAPHE BIMACULATA*.

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DISTRIBUTION

Elaphe bimaculata lives mainly in the Chinese provinces Kiangsu, Chekiang, Anhwei, Kiangsi and Hupei (Welch, 1988). It lives particularly in higher regions avoiding the lower lands. At some places it appears together with *Elaphe dione* (Schulz, 1986), and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish both species.



Foto 1: *Elaphe bimaculata*, vrouwtje, gestreepte variant, striped phase,

Foto H. Bartz

DESCRIPTION

Elaphe bimaculata shows two clearly to distinguish varieties: the first variety has a basic yellow colour with four lines running lengthwise along the entire body. Between the lines one can see small, usually red spots. The second variety has a yellow to brown basic colour with no lines at all. Instead of lines it has red to redbrown spots which shade off into one another and are outlined black. *Elaphe bimaculata* is small and slender, but in my opinion a typical Elaphe. The females achieve an average length of 90-100 cm, the males are somewhat smaller. *Elaphe bimaculata* is active both day and night.

VIVARIUM

Because of its length this snake is ideal for small and medium sized terrariums. As these snakes like to climb, the terrarium should be provided with some climbing trees. For substrate I use straw (in early days I used silver sand). A small water dish is usually enough, because the animals hardly ever take a bath.

During the summer the temperature is about 25-30°C. At night it is somewhat cooler. In the winter the animals stay in the vivarium, which is now filled with lots of newspapers. Between December and February the temperature falls to 12-15°C. For food the snakes get small to medium sized mice of different colours; white mice however are favourite. Both dead and living mice are accepted. Sometimes I sprinkle extra vitamins over dead mice. Very often the prey is constricted eagerly. The snakes are rather energetic and even after a long period spent in captivity they still behave nervously. In my opinion it is the spotted variety

which behaves less nervously. Both varieties hardly ever bite.

BREEDING

The following gives a description of my breeding experience with the striped variety, which I have owned since 1986. I obtained the spotted variety in October 1987. The spotted snakes mated for the first time in August 1988, being one year old. The first observed mating of the striped variety occurred on 25 August 1987. Further copulations followed on 26 September and 11 March 1988. Shortly before laying the eggs the female refused food. *Elaphe bimaculata* is willing to mate almost during the entire year. A mating can extend over some hours or even days. On 26 May eight pure white eggs were laid. They measured 20-45 mm and weighed about 12 g. The eggs were put into a plastic box, filled with moist vermiculite. The incubator was kept at 28°C plus/minus 0.5°C. The average humidity was 90-100%. Compared to the size of the snakes, the eggs are relatively large.

After 25 days, on 19 June 1988, the baby snakes hatched. They looked like their parents, weighed 7-9 g and had a length of 26-28 cm.

The incubation time is rather short for *Elaphe* eggs. The shortest incubation period however is for *Elaphe dione*, which only needs about a fortnight.

The eight youngsters sloughed for the first time after about ten days. Half of them started to eat on their own dead and live mice. Within a month all snakes ate without any help, and feeding well, young *Elaphe bimaculata* grow fast.

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