

# GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

## Emerald Tree Boa

*Corallus caninus*

### Range/Habitat

- The emerald tree boa occurs in parts of northern South America from Brazil to Bolivia.
- It is found in wet lowland rain forests with heavy precipitation.
- This boa is an arboreal species that spends most of its life in trees and bushes.

### Physical Characteristics

- The body of the adult emerald tree boa is green with a white, irregular stripe and white transverse bands or splotches on its dorsal surface. It has a yellow underbelly.
- Young are born red or orange in color and transition to green by about age 12 months.
- Adults generally range from about 4 to 6 feet (122 - 183 cm) in length, but individuals in the Amazon basin can reach 9 feet (274 cm).
- It has a large heart-shaped head, a narrow neck and a stout body that tapers to a long prehensile tail.
- This boa is not venomous, but has long curved front teeth that can inflict a painful bite.
- This species may live 15 to 20 years in captivity.

### Diet/Feeding

- The emerald tree boa is carnivorous. Its diet consists of arboreal rodents, squirrels, monkeys, lizards and bats. It will also consume birds.
- This species is a nocturnal hunter (see below).
- In the wild it may go as long as two months between meals.

### Conservation Status

- The emerald tree boa is not included on the IUCN Red List.

### Additional Information

- The emerald tree boa is an ambush predator. It spends the day coiled into a ball on top of a horizontal branch with its head poking out of the center of the coil. At night it extends its neck and head downward, waiting for a prey animal to move within range below. It strikes quickly, grasping and holding the prey with its long, curved teeth and then drawing it up to its body. The boa then suffocates its prey by constriction.
- Males reach sexual maturity in about three to four years and females at age four to five. Breeding may occur at any time of the year, but is most common in winter.
- This boa is ovoviviparous with the female giving birth to 10 to 12 young at a time. The gestation period is 6 to 7 months. Generally, reproduction occurs every other year.
- The young are about one foot (30 cm) long at birth and weigh about 1.5 ounces (43 grams). Females do not provide care after birth.
- The emerald tree boa is born with the ability to climb. It holds onto the tree trunk or limb with its tail and lower body, reaches up with its head, which it hooks around a branch, and then pulls its body upward.
- There are two types of emerald tree boa. One occurs in Surinam and nearby areas and is distinguished by its more lime green color, the broken white line on the back and larger scales on its head. The Amazon basin type has a darker green coloration, an unbroken brighter white dorsal line and small head scales. It is also less aggressive than those from Surinam.

- As with most snakes, this boa has heat sensors located near the mouth that help it locate warm blooded prey. It can also detect vibration through its belly.

**Sources**

<http://www.oregonzoo.org>

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/ReptilesAmphibians>

<http://www.oaklandzoo.org>

<http://animalsdiveristy.ummz.edu>