



**Captive Care of the
Coastal Taipan**
Oxyuranus scutellatus scutellatus
By Richard Mastenbroek



Information

Name:	Coastal Taipan
Continent:	Australia
Temp:	80-84F
Disposition:	Aggressive

About

Length:

Adults mostly grow up to 200 – 280 cm in length, but some specimens are known to grow bigger and supposedly Taipans can grow up to 400 cm in length.

Zoological Description:

The head is long and big like that of a mamba with a narrow head and a cylindrical shaped body. The colour of the body can be uniform light to dark brown from above, which is getting paler on the sides, others have a creamy- white coloured body, or coppery red. The ventral side is cream to yellowish. The eye is big and orange from colour with a round pupil. The head from the Taipan is often pale cream from colour especially in juveniles, when they grow older this pale colour will only stay at the snout of the snake.

Scalation:

- Dorsal scales at midbody 21-23
- Ventrals 220-250
- Subcaudals 45-80
- Subcaudals are divided
- Anal plate is Single
- Temporales 2+3 (3+4)

Geographical Range:

Taipans are only known from Australia and the Island of Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. The Australian subspecies lives in the coastal areas of Queensland and the Northern Parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The lowest place we can find Taipans is in the Northern Tip of New South Wales. Taipans do not live in areas with maximum winter temperature of 20°C.

Habitat.

Taipans like wetter coastal areas to live. In Queensland they can be often found in the sugarcane fields where they hunt rats and bandicoots. In Northern Queensland (Cape York Peninsula) they inhabit open woodland areas.

Captive Behaviour:

The experience I have with Australian Coastal Taipans is not much only from a 20 large adults at venom supplies and one pair of juveniles in my own collection.

The juveniles I keep are quite defensive snakes when working in their enclosure. They rear up and strike multiple times, they blow up and hiss. I also don't think that they are great on a hook as they keep on sliding off the hook, also tailing they don't like as they go mentally ill. In their enclosure they are curious little snakes that like to check everything out. In the morning and evening I mostly find them basking under the spotlight while they are mostly moving around during the day searching for food, even when I keep them in an enclosure that gives them the chance to climb on rocks and other decoration material I never see them climbing. Juvenile taipans have a strong feeding response and never seem to have problems with feeding.

Even when the most horrifying stories go about taipans I really think that they are not as bad as people say. Most captive adults I have worked with were the animals kept at Venom Supplies Pty. Ltd. Were they

were used as venom producers. These snakes got milked every week or every second week and were not aggressive at all. Most of the time were they basking in their enclosures and all of them were easy to work with by tailing and hooking them. Even as the juveniles do adults have a strong feeding response which some people translate to aggression which is not. The only time these taipans could give you hard time was when they needed to be milked place on the milking table they get a bit nervous and more alert as usual on a certain way do they recognize the table, jigger and milk beaker. They become more active and try to escape, I have never really seen any form of aggression in these animals.

Feeding:

In the wild do taipans feed on small mammals (rats, mice, bandicoots) and maybe also ground nesting birds. In captivity do taipans not give a lot of feeding problems the adults at the lab. Were all fed with dead mice or rats which they accept without a problem. The pair of juveniles that I keep feeds on mice that they get offered alive. I feed my juveniles every second day one mouse which they digest really quickly. Juvenile taipans can grow in their first year of live up to 150 cm while when feeding them a lot they are told to grow up to 200 cm.

Breeding:

Taipans are oviparous and produce 7-20 eggs. They are known to lay two clutches of eggs which are often within two months after laying the first clutch. The gestation period of the taipan is around 90 days. The eggs hatch after 60-85 days. Juvenile taipans are between 30-40 cm long at birth.

The enclosure:

The pair of Taipans I keep are kept separate in small enclosures the male is a captive born from January 2002 and is around 90 cm (3 feet) long, the female is a captive bred from February 2002 and is only 80 cm (2,5 feet) long. They are kept in enclosures of 60 x 60 x 60 cm (3 x 3 x 3 Feet) (L x W x H) Heating is done by a piece of heat tape under half of the enclosure which is switched on for 24 hours a day. In the central top of the enclosure is a 40 watt spotlight placed which provides them with light and heating for 14 hours a day. The average temperature in the enclosure is around 28°C and under the spotlight around 32-34°C the night temperature will drop to 25°C. The humidity level is kept quite low around 60% but will increase when the snakes need to shed their skin. As substrate I use French tree bark which is dried first before used. In the enclosure I have a shallow water dish because the taipans never use it to take a bath. As decoration material I used some plastic plants, tree trunks and rocks which can be used for hiding and climbing which they hardly do.