

Tiger Rat Snake (*Spilotes pullatus*)

Habitat and Distribution: Found in tropical lowlands and brushy woodlands of Mexico, south to Argentina.

Size: 10-12 feet long, and 10 pounds

Wild Diet: Small mammals, lizards, frogs, snakes, and birds.

Predators: Unknown

Life Span: Unknown

Reproduction: These snakes lay eggs several weeks after mating. Eggs are laid in warm areas and may be found in rotten logs or in sandy soil underneath rocks. The eggs will hatch 3-4 months after the snake has mated. Hatchlings will feed on frogs and lizards.

Behavior: Tiger rat snakes are mainly arboreal and can be extremely fast. They forage for their prey and are excellent hunters due to their acute eyesight. In fact, their vision ranks among the best of all the snakes. They will gauge distance by triangulation (moving their head from side to side like a hawk or an owl). Tiger rat snakes are never found far from a water source and they tend to gravitate toward rural livestock populations due to resident rat populations. Although they are capable of constricting their prey to death, they tend to swallow them alive. When threatened by a predator, a rat snake will inflate its neck, raise its body loops and thrash its tail. It may also hiss in attempts to ward off the predator. If this does not succeed, it will strike at the threat repeatedly.

Conservation Connection: Secure

Interesting Facts: These snakes are the longest members of the Colubridae family. They are named for their coloring and also its propensity to prey on resident rat populations near rural livestock. Depending on its location, the rat snake has colorations varying from lemon yellow with blue-black stripes and blotches to nearly solid black with yellow and orange markings.

