

Eggs or Live Birth?

Have you ever seen garter snake eggs or a short-tailed python give live birth? Neither have I! One of the amazing things about snakes is that some have live birth and some lay eggs! Now, those who have live birth do not actually do not actually carry their babies in the womb like mammals, rather, they grow their babies inside of their bodies as if they were in eggs. The "eggs" that they are in are rather a thin membrane that virtually dissolves once the snakes are ready to be born. This type of gestation is called ovoviviparous. Other snakes lay soft white eggs that incubate either in the mother snake's coils or in a damp burrow.

In general, boas have live birth (ovoviviparous) while pythons lay eggs (oviparous). There are some exceptions in the case of the Saudi Arabian sand boa. There is still a lot to be learned about these diverse reproductive features of reptiles. But one thing that we know for sure, is that this certainly keeps the reptile breeder on his/her toes! For all of us herpeticulturists, whether it's waiting for the hatch, or looking into our boa's cage every day to see if she "dropped" (snake lingo for "to have babies"), there is always something to look forward to. The diversity of reptiles is just one more thing that keeps the hobby so interesting!