MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

RED-TAILED BOA

Boa constrictor

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Reptile: a snake in the boa family (Boidae)
NATIVE REGION	Most of South America (not Chile or Uruguay), plus Trinidad and Tobago
HABITAT	Rainforest edges, dry forest, savanna, scrub and mangroves
DIET	Carnivore: mostly small mammals and birds
LENGTH	Most adults 6½–10 ft; the longest about 13 ft
WEIGHT	Heaviest females reported: about 77 lb
LIFESPAN	Often 25–35 years in human care; record just over 40
STATUS	Least Concern (IUCN Red List); CITES Appendix II
OUR BOA	Rocky



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- Boas give birth to live young instead of laying eggs.
- A forked tongue samples two spots at once to follow a scent trail.
- Two small spurs beside the vent are leftover hind legs.
- A boa's squeeze quickly stops its prey's blood flow.
- Boas adjust their squeeze in response to the prey's heartbeat.

Words to know

Constrictor: a snake that wraps its body around prey and squeezes.
Ambush: to wait out of sight, then catch something by surprise.
Camouflage: colors or patterns that help an animal blend in.
Live-bearing: giving birth to babies instead of laying eggs.

Think about it

1. How does a boa's forked tongue help it find food?
2. How could dark saddle markings help a boa survive in a forest?
3. How is the way a boa has babies different from a ball python or corn snake?
4. What happens to a prey animal's blood when a boa squeezes?
5. Maryland has 27 kinds of snakes. Are any of them boas? Use the temperature fact to explain.

Draw it

Draw a red-tailed boa coiled on a branch. Label the forked tongue, eye, head stripe, dark saddles, reddish tail and the two spurs near the vent.

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 4-LS1-2 · 3-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.4.B · 3.1.3.A · 3.1.3.G**

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/red-tailed-boa/ · **Sources:** Animal Diversity Web; IUCN Red List; CITES Species+; U.S. Geological Survey; Reptile Database; Maryland DNR; Boback et al. 2012, 2015; Schwenk 1994; Close et al. 2014
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 4-LS1-2 (3.1.4.B) · 3-LS1-1 (3.1.3.A) · 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G)
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RED-TAILED BOA

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the red-tailed boa live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Constrictor ☐ Ambush ☐ Camouflage ☐ Live-bearing

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the red-tailed boa.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?
☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Most of South America (not Chile or Uruguay), plus Trinidad and Tobago. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Carnivore: mostly small mammals and birds. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

- How could dark saddle markings help a boa survive in a forest?

_____

- How is the way a boa has babies different from a ball python or corn snake?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/red-tailed-boa/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.
Grades 3–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 4-LS1-2 · 3-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.4.B · 3.1.3.A · 3.1.3.G**

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