

Red-Tail Allure

With the proper care, boa constrictors are as resilient as they are beautiful.

By John Bergman

I was 17 years old when I entered a pet store to buy bird food and a mouse for my gopher snake. The owner, a big guy who introduced himself as Rich Ihle, approached me in the bird department.

“If you like those birds,” he said. “You will really like this.”

He took me to the other side of the store and placed a female red-tail boa (*Boa constrictor imperator*) in my hand. She was incredibly smooth compared to the snakes I’d grown up with in Arizona, and she sat calmly in my hands, studying me while I studied her. Within the hour I put money down on the snake, and I immediately started planning how to get another. Her name was Ruby, and she was the foundation of my boa colony for the next 11 years.

That encounter with Rich was 22 years ago. Now I’m the manager of his websites. I have made boa constrictors a lifelong passion, and working with a large number of them has taught me a ton about husbandry.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the February 2009 issue of REPTILES, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.