

# Conservation

The VI tree boa was included in the federal endangered species list in 1979. It is also included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and locally protected by the VI Indigenous and Endangered Species Act of 1990, Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits the killing, harassing, trapping, purchasing or selling any listed species, as well as parts and products derived from the species.



VI tree boas spend most of their time in trees but can occasionally be found around homes and in yards on the ground.

There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the tree boa continues to be a part of the natural heritage of the Virgin Islands. To help preserve the long-term survival of the VI tree boa, the Division of Fish and Wildlife and its partners have reintroduced this species to an offshore cay that is free of rats and mongooses by relocating boas brought in by the public and releasing captive born animals from the Toledo Zoo. Current efforts are underway in the USVI by DFW, FW Zoo, NC Zoo, USFWS and UVI. Although the program was successful in the past, more surveys need to be conducted on the species.

The Virgin Islands tree boa is **non-venomous** and poses no threat to humans.

If tree boas are not in danger, do not disturb them! They're nocturnal and usually hide during the day. It is illegal to capture them and they do not make good pets!

If you find a VI tree boa in immediate danger, for example in the middle of a construction site, please place it in a well-ventilated container (so it can breathe) and call the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Also, if you see a tree boa in danger of being injured or killed, or find a dead tree boa, please call the Division of Fish and Wildlife, 340-775-6762 – St. Thomas



### REMEMBER:

*It is illegal to capture, take, possess, injure, harass or kill any indigenous or endangered species.*

## YOU CAN HELP!

Reduce the negative environmental effects you have on native species by minimizing your impact on the island and watching for these unique snakes crossing the road.



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ENDANGERED ▶ U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

# VIRGIN ISLANDS TREE BOA



## Description

The Virgin Islands tree boa (*Chilabothrus (Epicrates) granti*) is **non-venomous** and **harmless**. It is easily identified since they are the only native snake species with blotchy patterning. Tree boas may live longer than 30 years. They may grow to a maximum of 3 feet (1m) in length. The body of adults is a light brown, with chestnut blotches edged in black. A newly shed boa will have a blue-purple iridescence. Juveniles are a light grey with black blotches, and change to the adult coloration as they mature.



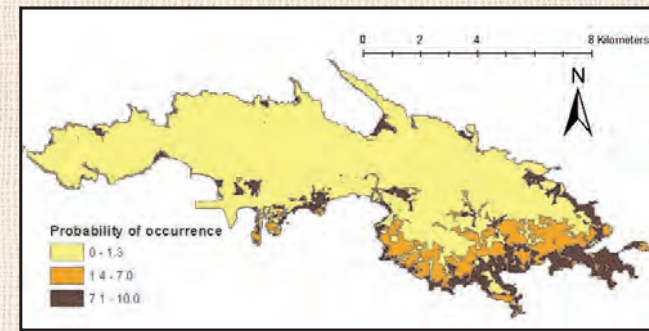
## Diet

Anoles and other small lizards are the preferred food item for the tree boa, although they may also eat hatchling iguanas, nestling birds, or mice. Tree boas actually help control pests and are completely harmless to people. From limited observations of VI tree boas hunting they seem to glide along tree branches looking for sleeping lizards. The lizards and other prey are constricted before being swallowed headfirst and whole.



## Reproduction

Courtship and mating seems to occur from February through May. During the gestation period, which can last up to 150 days females will raise their body temperature above that of the surrounding environment. The VI tree boa is ovoviviparous; that is to say, they give birth to live young. Birthing usually occurs from August through October. The young are born in litters comprised of 2 to 10 individuals, depending on the mother's size, and are totally independent after birth. There is no parental care. It is believed that females reproduce every other year, and the young take three years to reach sexual maturity. However, very little is known about the boa's reproduction in the wild.



## Habitat & Distribution

VI tree boas live in the tropical dry forests of St. Thomas. They are also found in Puerto Rico and on Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Areas with slopes and rocky shallow soil covered in dense vegetation are prime habitat for this elusive boa. As with the majority of boas, the VI boa is more active at night. Although rare, they can sometimes be seen basking in the sun, usually near rocks or logs, around houses and yard debris. Current research will help us understand the boas behavior and habitat use.

## Threats

Tree boas are classified as an endangered species. Misunderstanding and persecution by humans is a serious threat, followed by:

### LOSS OF HABITAT

Due to agriculture and development, building homes and businesses in boa habitat may lead to fragmented habitat, and changes within existing habitats that make them less hospitable to tree boas.

### DEPREDAATION & INVASIVE SPECIES

Animals such as the domestic cat, black rat, Norwegian rat and Asian mongoose have become a major threat to the VI tree boa. They were introduced to the Virgin Islands by humans.