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2nd graders with their pet corn snake, Jewels.



SLITHER INTO

Your Heart

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A QUESTION & ANSWER PAMPHLET
ABOUT PET CORN SNAKES

By the Conservatory Lab Charter School
2011 - 2012 Second Grade Class

SLITHER INTO

Your Heart

BY THE CONSERVATORY LAB
CHARTER SCHOOL
2011 - 2012 2ND GRADE CLASS



Second graders with their pet corn snake, Jewels.

PHOTOS BY TONI JACKSON & JENNA GAMPEL

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INTRODUCTION

We are the second graders at the Conservatory Lab Charter School. We learned about corn snakes in our class. When we started, we had a lot of questions. In order to become corn snake experts, we worked with a partner to answer the questions in this pamphlet. We observed snake habitats at Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary, read books, watched videos, and cared for a corn snake named Jewels in order to become corn snake experts. We think corn snakes would make great pets and want to share what we learned with others who are trying to pick a perfect pet. This pamphlet is perfect for children and family members who are interested in getting a pet.

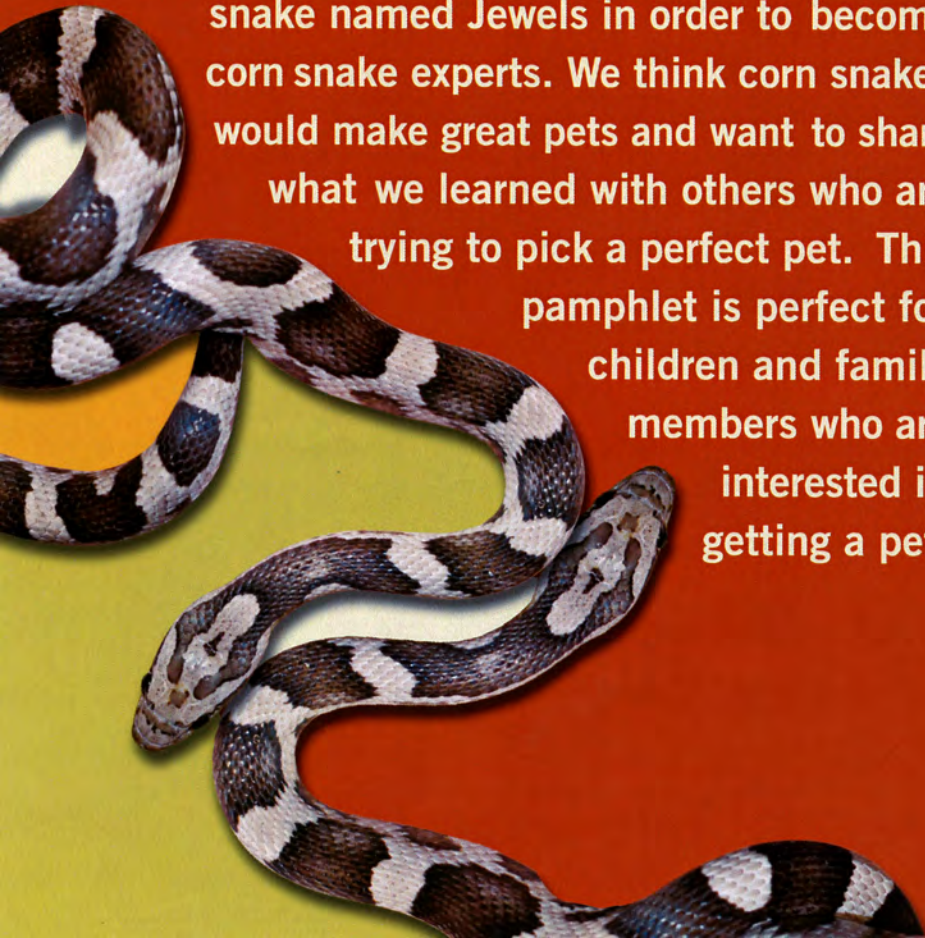


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How to Care

FOR A PET CORN SNAKE



Let the snake hold you!

IS A CORN SNAKE A GOOD PET?

Corn snakes are good pets because corn snakes are not venomous. Venom means they have poison in their fangs. Corn snakes are very gentle and almost never bite. We know because we have a pet corn snake in our classroom. Corn snakes are easy to care for. Keep reading to see other reasons why corn snakes would make good pets.

WHAT DO CORN SNAKES LOOK LIKE?

Corn snakes can be many different colors. In the wild they are usually orange. Some have stripes and marks that look like Native American corn. These marks could be red, yellow, or orange. Some corn snakes are white, and others are charcoal gray. Some are even purple! Our class pet corn snake, Jewels, is black and white with patches of gray.

How to Care

FOR A PET CORN SNAKE

HOW DO YOU HANDLE A CORN SNAKE?

To handle a corn snake, first wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. First pet it so it knows you're there. When you pet a snake, use two fingers and gently rub away from the head to the tail. If you rub from the tail up to the head, you will hurt the snake. It would feel like pulling back fingernails! Carefully carry the corn snake. Open your hand wide and let the snake hold you — put your hand under so it won't fall down. Do not pinch or grab the snake or it will hurt it. To put the snake back in the tank put your hand in the tank and let it slither onto you. Let the snake slither where the snake wants to go.

DO YOU NEED TO TAKE A PET CORN SNAKE OUT FOR WALKS OR TO EXERCISE?

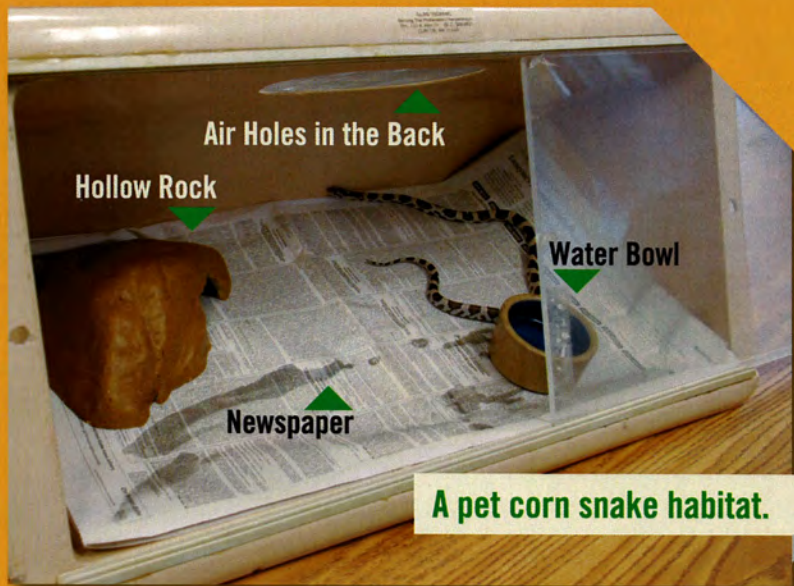
It's an easy pet! You don't need to walk it. You don't need to pick up its poop. You don't need to exercise with it. You don't need to feed it every day. The corn snake has its own habitat to live in. You are not supposed to bring any pet snake outside to exercise — snakes only slither. If you bring it outside, it could get lost.

WHERE CAN YOU GET A PET CORN SNAKE?

You can get a corn snake from a pet store or a herpetologist. Wild corn snakes need to be left in the wild. If you try to pick up a snake from the wild it could think you are a predator and might bite you! If you take it from the wild without sanitizing or washing your hands the germs can spread to different places where you live and people might get diseases from the snake.

WHAT MATERIALS DO YOU NEED TO CARE FOR A PET CORN SNAKE?

You need a tank for pet corn snakes. Make sure there are holes to breathe. You can put the newspaper on the floor of the cage. Put a hollow log in the cage (when the corn snake is 6 months old). If you put a branch or log in the cage you have to cook it (not in the microwave). You can put a rock inside, too. Put a water bowl — make sure it's not too big. That's what we did for Jewels, our pet snake. You can give it filtered or clean water.



A pet corn snake habitat.

WHAT TEMPERATURE DOES A CORN SNAKE NEED TO LIVE IN?

A corn snake needs to live in 65 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Corn snakes need to live in this temperature because they are cold blooded. Cold blooded means snakes' body temperatures are the same as the air around them. Their bodies could slow down if the temperature changes. They can freeze and die. If the tank gets too hot, your snake could die.

CAN YOU FIND WILD CORN SNAKES IN MASSACHUSETTS?

No, you can't find wild corn snakes in Massachusetts, but you can find them in Southeastern United States. They live in the forest and in hot places. Corn snakes also live in rocky hillsides or meadows.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR PET CORN SNAKE GOES MISSING?

We lost our pet corn snake because she slithered out of her aquarium. If you loose a corn snake, don't freak out! You should look everywhere like we did. Look in corners and warm places, like close to a heater. Don't stomp your feet because the snake will hear only vibrations and it will be afraid! Be quiet and calm so the corn snake won't slither away. If you find it, NEVER pick it up by pulling or tugging. We found our snake in a small corner of the classroom. Now we are very careful to make sure the cage is always securely locked.

WHAT KIND OF FOOD DO PET CORN SNAKES EAT?

Corn snakes eat different sized mice — pinkies, fuzzies, and hoppers. Mice give corn snakes protein and calcium. You can get frozen mice at a reptile or pet store. Corn snakes do drink water, in fact they drink a lot of water. They stick their head in the water bowl and then they stick their tongue out and lick the water. Gulp.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU NEED TO FEED CORN SNAKES?

It depends on the size. Younger, thinner corn snakes eat smaller mice more frequently, while older, larger corn snakes eat bigger mice less frequently. Our one-year-old corn snake ate two smaller mice (fuzzies) in about one month. Most corn snakes eat one to four mice per month. Ask a herpetologist or corn snake expert to learn how often to feed your pet corn snake!

Jewels eating a fuzzy.



HOW DO YOU FEED A PET CORN SNAKE?

To feed a corn snake first get the frozen mouse. Then put the mouse in hot water (to defrost it). Next, put some hand sanitizer on your hands. After that, put the corn snake in a different container than its habitat because the snake might think you are food. Then hold the mouse with tongs in front of the snake's head. You'll have to hold the mouse headfirst, then shake the mouse with the tongs so the snake will think it's alive! After that, let the snake bite the mouse and let the mouse go. The snake will eat the mouse whole.



Look at Jewels feed on her prey!

HOW DO CORN SNAKES GROW?

A corn snake grows by eating mice and shedding. It sheds because its old skin gets tight like a tight shirt. What happens when a corn snake sheds is: first the corn snake's eyes get milky white — then it rubs its nose on something firm — then the corn snake wiggles around and the skin comes off and goes inside out. How often they shed depends on their age — old snakes grow less than young snakes so old snakes shed less. Another word for shedding is molting.



Corn snakes shed their skin to keep growing.

DO CORN SNAKES LAY EGGS?

Yes, corn snakes lay eggs. They mate in the spring. Then the female lays a clutch of 3 to 40 eggs. She hides the clutch in a rotting stump or animal burrow. Jewels is our pet corn snake. She will never lay eggs because she has no mate.

HOW BIG DO CORN SNAKES GET? HOW LONG WILL CORN SNAKES LIVE?

Our pet corn snake, Jewels, is 21 inches and 1 year old. We measured her shedded skin to find out how long she was. Corn snakes can live up to 20 years old. The world record for the longest corn snake is almost 6 feet long!



Student captivated by the life of a snake.



Second graders get to know

their new pet snake!

ABOUT CONSERVATORY LAB

Conservatory Lab is a K1-6 music-infused charter school in the heart of Boston. We believe in the power of music to transform the lives of children and adolescents.

We use Expeditionary Learning as a framework for our unique, interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates music and other creative processes. Our learning expeditions are discovery operations. We cherish active, hands-on situations where what we are doing matters to us and has consequences. To encourage deeper learning, our expeditions demand fieldwork and assistance from experts.

Conservatory Lab is also the only school in the country to incorporate El Sistema Program and Methods into its core school day. El Sistema is a unique program designed to nurture promising futures for underserved communities through intensive, ensemble-focused music education.

To find out more about Conservatory Lab, visit our website.

2ND GRADE CORN SNAKE EXPERTS:



Alan	Angelique	Hafeedh	Meghan
Anastasia	Angelo	Jaylan	Mini
Angelica	Brendan	Javier	Niko
	Bryan	Kamaal	Rainier
	Cashmere	Kailyn	Stella
	Edilenia	Kevy	Tess
	Gabriel	Mayara	Zoya

Miss Gampel & Miss Klove,
Second Grade Teachers