

Orange Giant Rabbit Snail

Tylomelania gemmifera

By John Moyles

Orange giant rabbit snails (*Tylomelania gemmifera*) are a known as Elephant Snails, their natural habitat is two lakes in Sulawesi, Lake Matana and Lake Mahalong where they live in the shallows.

Orange giant rabbit snails have yellow-orange mantle, and their shells are black or very dark brown and sometimes feature a white crown. Their shells are long and spiral-shaped and taper toward a point at the end, which makes the shell resemble narwhal horn in shape. Giant rabbit snails get pretty large and can reach up to 4 inches.



They are algae-eaters, but they also need supplemental feedings of prepared foods, and vegetables such as blanched zucchini, lettuce, carrots and sweet potato. Calcium is important for shell growth and cuttlebone should be provided. While most aquatic plants are safe from these snails, they have been known to eat delicate or thin-leaved plants.

Breeding is easy but time consuming. They are dioecious and sexually monomorphic. You need a female and male, but they look the same. It is best to get a group of at least 6. They are oviparous, the female carries a fertilized egg within her until it is released after 4 to 6 weeks. A fully-formed baby snail is released within a small, gelatinous “egg” sac. The egg sac is soft, a nutrient rich covering that encases the youngster through gestation. Young can be left with the parents.

They have been assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as Endangered with a declining population in the wild. Threats include mining and quarrying, dams and water management use, pollution from agriculture, logging and industry, overharvest and invasive species.