

Ball Python

Python regius

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Reptilia
Order Squamata
Family Pythonidae

Native to: Africa

Status: Least Concern



The population of Ball Pythons is considered to be large though reductions in numbers are happening due to habitat destruction, pet trade and the market for their skins. Increased use of the land for agricultural use may produce enough increase in the rodent population to sustain this snake in its natural habitat.

Appearance & Lifespan

Adult Ball Pythons generally do not grow to more than 4 feet in length, although some specimens have reached 6 feet, but this is very rare. Females tend to be slightly bigger than males. Their build is stocky and their head is relatively small. The scales are smooth and both sexes have anal spurs on either side of the vent.

The color pattern is typically black or dark brown with light brown or gold sides and dorsal blotches. The belly is a white or cream and may include scattered black markings.

The captive lifespan of the Ball Python is 20 - 30 years, the record is 48 years. The lifespan in the wild is expected to be much lower at around 10 years due to predation and living conditions.





Behavior & Reproduction

This terrestrial species is named after its defense strategy that involves coiling into a tight ball when threatened, with its head and neck tucked away in the middle. In this state, it can literally be rolled around. The python also has the tendency to hiss loudly when it feels threatened. Ball Pythons are secretive and spend most of their days hiding in tight-fitting shelters. They are nocturnal so they are more active at night.

Sexual maturity is reached at 6–18 months for males, 12–36 months for females. Age is only one factor in determining sexual maturity and ability to breed – weight is the second factor, they must be between 1-3 lbs. Females will lay anywhere from 3-11 large, leathery eggs. These are incubated by the female under the ground and hatch after 55 to 60 days. The hatchlings are between 14”-17”. Parental care of the eggs ends once they hatch, and the female leaves the offspring to fend for themselves.

Due to their smaller size compared to other pythons and their docile temperament, these snakes are bred in captivity and have become popular as pets. Juveniles tend to be more aggressive at first, but typically calm down as they get used to human contact.

Ecology & Habitat

The Ball Python prefers to live in grasslands, savannahs and sparsely wooded areas.

Found in Africa from Senegal, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin, Niger and Nigeria through Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic to Sudan and Uganda.

In the wild, their diet consists mostly of small mammals, such as African soft-furred rats, shrews and striped mice. Younger individuals have also been known to feed on birds.

At the zoo the Ball Pythons are fed mice and small rats twice a month.

Did You Know?

1. The Ball Python is also known as the Royal Python.
2. Sometimes many snakes will stay together in one burrow.
3. The heat sensing pits on the snakes face can detect a .026°C temperature change.

