

Burmese Python

Python molurus bivittatus

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Reptilia
Order Squamata
Family Pythonidae



Native to: Southern and Southeast Asia

Status: Threatened

All the giant pythons have historically been slaughtered to supply the world leather market, as well as for folk medicines, and captured for the pet trade. Some are also killed for food, particularly in China. In Hong Kong, it is a protected species under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance. In Florida, USA there is a different situation. The captive breeding of Burmese Pythons in the Americas has led to some rather serious problems. People who grow tired of their pythons, or whose pythons have grown too large to be kept in their houses, have been known to release their pets into the wild rather than have them re-homed. This has been particularly problematic in Florida where a large number of pythons have made their way to the Everglades. They have thrived there, begun to reproduce prolifically, and become an invasive species.

Appearance & Lifespan

The Burmese Python is one of the 6 largest snakes in the world. Wild individuals average 3.7 meters (12 ft) long, but may reach up to 5.8 meters (19 ft) and can be as big around as a telephone pole. They can weigh up to 200 pounds (90 kilograms). They will shed their skin multiple times a year. Burmese Pythons are light-colored snakes with many brown blotches bordered in black down the back. They have brown eyes and pink tongues.

The Burmese Python can live to over 25 years of age in proper conditions.





Behavior & Reproduction

Burmese Pythons are mainly nocturnal rainforest dwellers. When younger they are equally at home on the ground and in trees, but as they gain girth they tend to restrict most of their movements to the ground. They are good climbers and have prehensile tails. They are also excellent swimmers, being able to stay submerged for up to half an hour. Burmese Pythons spend the majority of their time hidden in the underbrush. In the northern parts of its range it may brumate for some months during the cold season in a hollow tree, a hole in the riverbank or under rocks. Brumation is different from hibernation. While the behaviour has similar benefits, specifically to endure the winter without moving, it also involves preparation of both male and female reproductive organs for the upcoming breeding season.

Burmese Pythons breed in the early spring, with females laying clutches which an average of 12–36 eggs in March or April. She will remain with the eggs until they hatch, wrapping around them and twitching her muscles in such a way as to raise the ambient temperature around the eggs by several degrees. Once the hatchlings use their egg tooth to cut their way out of their eggs, there is no further maternal care. The newly hatched will often remain inside their egg until they are ready to complete their first shedding of skin, after which they hunt for their first meal.

Ecology & Habitat

The Burmese Python is found throughout Southern- and Southeast Asia including Eastern India, Nepal, Western Bhutan, Southeast Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Northern continental Malaysia, Southern China and in Indonesia on Java, Southern Sulawesi, Bali and Sumbawa. This python is an excellent swimmer and needs a permanent source of water. It can be found in grasslands, marshes, swamps, rocky foothills, woodlands, river valleys, and jungles with open clearings.

Like all snakes, Burmese Pythons are carnivorous. Their diet consists primarily of appropriately sized birds and mammals. The snake uses its sharp rearward-pointing teeth to seize its prey, then it wraps its body around the prey, at the same time contracting its muscles, killing the prey by constriction.

At the zoo the Burmese Python is fed 1-3 rabbits once a month.

Did You Know?

1. A key factor in recognizing that a snake is getting ready to shed its skin is cloudiness in their eyes.
2. They have poor eyesight, and stalk prey using chemical receptors in their tongues and heat-sensors along the jaws.
3. These snakes kill their prey by suffocation, not venom.

