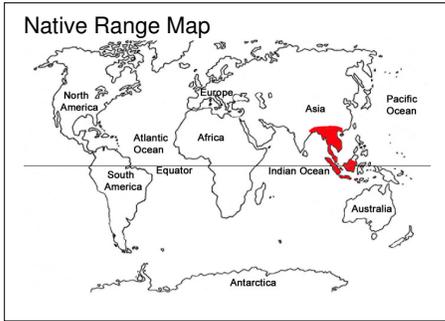


Reticulated Python



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Squamata
Family: Pythonidae
Genus: *Python*
Species: *reticulatus*



Photo courtesy of Tony Wisneski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Reticulated pythons are found in Southeast Asia, Indochina, Indonesia and the Philippines. They inhabit steamy tropical rainforests, are heavily dependent on water, and can often be found near small rivers or ponds. They require tropical environments with temperatures in the range of 80 – 92 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Exhibit Location:** USS Antiquities

Characteristics

- Length: 16 to 33 ft.; Weight 150 to 320 lbs.
- The reticulated python has a complex, geometric pattern that incorporates a number of different colors. A series of irregular diamond shapes are positioned along the back usually flanked with smaller markings that have light centers. This gives the snake a reticulated (netlike) pattern. The head is unmarked with only a conspicuous line running from each eye to the angle of the jaws.
- Reticulated pythons are strictly carnivorous. They have sharp teeth that are curved towards the back of the mouth. They use their 100 curved teeth to hold onto their prey, and they kill the animals they catch by wrapping around them and squeezing. The animal is quickly unable to breath and its heart is unable to pump blood. Pythons can kill their prey in minutes and they swallow their food whole. The entire animal is digested in the snake's stomach. They have a low metabolic rate allowing them to go without food for long periods of time.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** about 23 years; **In Captivity** 25-29 years

Behaviors

- They are relatively non-social animals and prefer to be solitary. Reticulated pythons have an aggressive feeding response, not an aggressive behavior. They are not confrontational.
- Juvenile reticulated pythons are arboreal (tree dwelling) and terrestrial (ground dwelling). Adults are seldom found in trees. They are active at dusk and throughout the night.
- If disturbed, *Python reticulatus* makes a hissing sound.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** Misting
- **Reproduction**
- Sexual maturity is reached in the first 2-5 years. Males breed at 7 to 9 feet long, while females are typically 11 feet long before they become receptive.
- Breeding usually takes place between the months of September – March. Females usually lay between 20 and 100 eggs, depending on her size. The eggs are white and have a soft, leathery shell. Female pythons wrap their powerful bodies around their eggs until they are ready to hatch. This behavior is known as brooding, and it prevents the eggs from getting too warm or too cool. The eggs need to remain close to 89 degrees Fahrenheit during the incubation period. To accomplish this, the female will “shiver,” producing muscle contractions which serve to increase the overall temperature of the eggs. The incubation period lasts about 85 days.
- Once free from the egg, the hatchlings are on their own. They must use their coloration and reticulated pattern to hide from predators and to hunt for food. Some of the hatchling pythons get eaten by other animals.

- The hatchling python's are 26 to 35 inches long and weigh only 4 to 5 ounces. From the time they hatch, these snakes are predators and they can kill and eat small mice, rats, lizards and frogs.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** birds, porcupines, monkeys, wild pigs and other mammals
- **At the Zoo:** offered one rabbit every few weeks. Due to its lower metabolism, it frequently will not eat for weeks or months.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Status:** – Unlisted; **CITES:** Appendix II This snake is widespread but diminishing in number throughout its range. Hundreds of thousands of reticulated pythons are taken from the wild to be killed for their skins each year, raising doubts about the long-term sustainability of this species. When encountered in its natural state by humans, this snake is almost always killed. Rapid growth rate, early maturation and high fecundity (producing abundantly) are the only things keeping this snake around.
- To help insure that this snake will not become endangered, we should never purchase products that have been made from snake skin.
- **Predators:** adult snakes - humans; young snakes - crocodiles, peccaries, wart hogs and raptors

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Reticulated pythons are the longest snakes found in the wild or living in a zoo.
- In the animated movie "Shrek", a row of hanging reticulated python skins were used by the ogre as a room divider.
- The zoo recommends not having a reticulated python as a pet since they need a lot of resources to survive and they live a long time.

Sources:

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