

Green Anaconda

Eunectes murinus



Physical Characteristics

- This reptile is a heavy-bodied snake.
- Olive green to brown color with black rounded spots on the back but yellow along the underside
- Dorsal scales are small, smooth and glossy while the ventral scales are longer and more narrow for use in locomotion.
- The head is adapted to its aquatic lifestyle with the eyes and nasal openings situated on the top of the head to allow them see and breathe while submerged in water.
- Sexual Dimorphism: greatest sexual dimorphism of any land vertebrate. Breeding females can be up to five times the size of breeding males.

Size

- Length: females average 15-20 feet, males average about 9 feet
- Width: Average diameter of 12 inches
- Weight: 330-550 pounds

Lifespan

- Wild: 10 years
- Zoos: 20 years

Behaviors

- Constrictor, nonvenomous, ambush predator.
- Semi-aquatic, often found submerged in shallow freshwater and are found in seasonally flooded areas.
- Anacondas will hang from branches to dry off after a swim
- They are ambush predators that will lie and wait submerged in shallow water. Once a prey animal crosses their path, it will quickly strike. They will then use its jaws to hold onto prey while its thick body wraps around the animal to suffocate it. Then it swallows it whole.

Diet

- Wild: aquatic birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish. Land animals include peccaries, capybaras, tapirs, deer.
- Zoo: Rats and rabbits
- Digests food very slowly, often taking days or weeks to digest food. May not eat for weeks or months after a large meal.

Reproduction

- Sexual maturity may be achieved by males at 18 months of age, while females reach maturity at 3 years old.
- Courtship lasts about 2 months and mating period is from April to May
- Female lays a trail of pheromones that can attract multiple males.
- The female and between 2-12 males will bunch together in a breeding-ball and may stay together like this for 2-4 weeks.
- Gestation of eggs is 6-7 months.
- Ovoviviparous in that the mother carries the fertilized eggs inside her body until they hatch. She then gives birth to live young, as many as 82, but usually between 28-42.
- When born, baby anacondas are about 2 feet long. They are quickly able to swim and hunt.

Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Tropical lowlands in wetlands, swamps, and slow-moving streams in tropical forests, savannas, and grasslands.
- Range: Throughout much of South America east of the Andes Mountains, especially in the Amazon River basin in Brazil, Orinoco basin of Columbia, and the flooded Llanos grasslands of Venezuela.



Conservation

- IUCN Status: Least concern
- Threats: Habitat loss, illegal wildlife trade for skins, limited pet trade
- Few natural predators for adults, predators for young include other green anacondas.
- Humans are a great threat due to ignorance and creation of unfounded beliefs that anacondas are “man-eaters,” for which there is no credible evidence.

Classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Subphylum: Vertebrata
- Class: Reptilia
- Order: Squamata
- Family: Boidae
- Genus: *Eunectes*
- Species: *E. murinus*

Interesting Facts

- **The Biggest**: The green anaconda is the largest snake in the world by weight and can weigh as much 1,100 pounds. While the reticulated python can be longer in length, the massive bulk of the anaconda is nearly as long and twice as heavy as the python.
- **What a big mouth you have**: Contrary to popular belief, snakes do not “unhinge” their jaws to eat large prey. Snakes have two lower jaws that are not fused together. Each lower jaw has 2 hinges which allows snakes to move each jaw up and down, forward and back, as well as out to the side, spreading their lower jaws very wide so they can swallow prey much larger than their own head.
- **What a strong smell you have**: The anaconda body is covered with scales except for the cloaca. There are glands in the cloaca that emit an orange-brown, foul smelling musk that is poisonous for small animals. It is believed that the scent prevents ticks and leeches from attaching themselves.