

# Reticulated Python

*Python reticulatus*



## Physical Characteristics

- Reticulated python females grow much larger than males in respect to size and weight.
- They have a repeated pattern of black X's over a brown/tan base creating diamond-like pattern.
- Younger pythons have been reported having latitudinal lines with black-edged spots across their bodies.
- Pythons have four rows of back-curving teeth in their upper jaw and two rows of teeth in their lower jaw that they use for obtaining, holding, and moving prey back into the esophagus.

## Average Size

- Length: 5-30 ft (Average: 11 ft)
- Weight: 220-595 lb (Average: 330 lb)

## Average Lifespan

- In the Wild: 20 years
- In captivity: 23 years

## Behaviors

- Activity Cycle: Nocturnal ambush predator
- Reticulated pythons are terrestrial and arboreal.
- The python is a constrictor. It grabs its prey with its teeth, quickly wrapping its body around the prey, and then constricts until the prey exhales, then squeezes a little more so the prey cannot inhale, thus suffocating its prey.
- They occupy areas that are close to water sources. This allows for easier movement due to their large size and also serves as camouflage for ambushing prey.
- They do not have ears. Instead, they have an auditory organ called a "columella" which allows the python to sense vibrations in the ground. Due to the absence of ears, reticulated pythons must use physical movements to create vibrations in order to communicate to one another.
- They also communicate with other snakes by using a series of pheromones applied to the topsoil of the forest floor. These pheromones allow other snakes to interpret the sex, reproductive success, and age of the individual that deposited the pheromone.
- They are not social animals, however, they tend not to be confrontational. They will strike if provoked or threatened.

## Diet

- Wild: Birds and small mammals. As the python gets older it will eat larger mammals such as dogs, deer, and pigs
- Zoo: Rabbits, large rodents

## Habitat and Range

- Habitat: Tropical rainforests, wetlands, and grasslands
- Range: Southeastern Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia

## Reproduction

- Gestation Period: 60 - 90 days (Average 70 days)
- Fledging/Parenting: Unlike most snake species, the reticulated python female remains coiled above the incubating eggs in order to provide warmth. There is no parental care provided after hatching.
- Breeding Interval: Every one to three years



- **Clutch Size:** In a breeding year, a single female can produce 8-107 eggs, but the number is typically 25-50 eggs.
- **Breeding Behaviors:** Reticulated pythons are oviparous, meaning they lay eggs to reproduce. They reach sexual maturity within 3-5 years. The male uses vibrations to signal his mating status to the female, who will choose whether to mate or not.

### Conservation

- **Status:** Least concern
- **Threats:** Hunting and trapping for selling their meat, skin, body parts and as pets poses a risk to populations if regulation fails. Loss of habitat due to human activities and persecution are also threats.
- **Predators:** Python eggs and newly-hatched pythons are at risk from predators such as birds (hawks, eagles, herons) and small mammals. However, the predation on adult pythons is very scarce and limited to crocodiles, humans and other large predators.

### Classification

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|--------------------------------|---|
| • <b>Kingdom:</b> Animalia     | • <b>Order:</b> Squamata                |
| • <b>Phylum:</b> Chordata      | • <b>Family:</b> Boidae                 |
| • <b>Subphylum:</b> Vertebrata | • <b>Genus:</b> <i>Python</i>           |
| • <b>Class:</b> Reptilia       | • <b>Species:</b> <i>P. reticulatus</i> |

### Interesting Facts

- **Smelly Tongue** - This species lacks good eyesight and relies on vibrations from the ground and its surroundings which it can detect with its lower jaws. It has an acute sense of smell through the use of its forked tongue. After retracting the tongue, scent particles from the air are transferred to the vomeronasal organ on the roof of the mouth to produce directional smell.
- **Slow Success** - Pythons cannot move very fast, only about 1 mile per hour on open ground. Since they are ambush predators and do not have to chase their prey, speed is not an issue.
- **Swimming Snake** - Reticulated pythons have been observed swimming in the ocean. This is probably how they originally occupied islands in the Pacific Ocean, where some of them now live.
- **Hips Don't Lie** - They are considered primitive snakes because they have remnants of hind legs and pelvic bones, which connect snakes to their ancient past when they used to have legs.
- **Lengthy Legend** - The longest snake ever recorded was a Reticulated python that measured 32 feet 9 ½ inches long. The heaviest snake, however, is the Anaconda which can get to be upwards of 500 hundred pounds.