



Project Noah, Inc.

Website: www.projectnoah.com

Email: info@projectnoah.com

IRS 501(c)3: 61-1320740

Animal Fact Sheet

Burmese Python



Description:

- Bold color pattern mainly in browns and yellows.
- Small spurs represent the vestiges of hind limbs.
- Grows to a length of 20 feet. Maximum recorded length is 25 feet.

Geographical Range And Habitat:

- Found from India to lower China, the Malay Peninsula and on some islands of the East Indies.
- Lives near water and is semi-aquatic.

Diet:

- Small mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and even fish.
- Kills by constriction in which the prey is suffocated.
- A nocturnal hunter, it prowls looking for prey or waits by a water hole.

Life Cycle/Social Structure:

- Lays 8-100 eggs usually 3-4 months after mating.
- The female pushes them together in a heap and coils herself around them, brooding them for 2-3 months. She actually incubates them (using muscular contractions to warm) by keeping their body temperature several degrees above that of the surrounding air.
- When hatched, the young grow rapidly but suffer much predation. As they grow larger, however, fewer animals can overpower them.

Special Adaptations:

- Heat sensors along the upper lip as well as its keen sense of smell help it to find prey.
- As with other snakes, the python's loosely hinged jaws can be stretched far apart, enabling it to swallow animals with bodies much larger in diameter than the python's head.
- They are good climbers and have prehensile tails.

Interpretive Information:

- According to Grzmek it is a subspecies of the Indian Python and is the python most commonly seen in zoos and circuses.
- Also known as the Asiatic Rock Python.
- The Old World python and New World boa are clearly the closest living relatives of the ancestral snake type.

Status In Wild:

- Hatchlings are popular as pets and sizeable numbers are exported from Southeast Asia annually.
- Wild populations are also heavily exploited by the exotic leather trade.
- The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in Morges, Switzerland) lists the Burmese Python as endangered. CITES and the US Wildlife Service list only the Indian Python.

Bibliography:

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 3. Stidworthy, John. 1971. Snakes of the World, Grosset & Dunlap, NY, p.54-57.
 4. Vanishing Species. 1974. Time-Life Books, New York, pp. 186, 253.
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