

Carpet Python

Morelia spilota

Rare

Bioregion resources



Biodiversity

Carpet Pythons are semi-arboreal snakes (sometimes spending time in trees) which are non-venomous and popular as pets around the world. They are nocturnal, grow up to three metres long and can weigh up to 5kg. They are very strong and are often the largest predator in their ecological community. The skins of different individuals show many colour variations ranging from black with dark brown spots to a golden colour. Their patterns often help them to remain camouflaged in their habitat. Carpet Pythons feature in many creation stories from different groups of Aboriginal People.

Diet

Carpet Pythons are constrictors, meaning they kill their prey by suffocation. Their diet consists mainly of small mammals, bats, birds and lizards.

Breeding

Carpet Pythons are usually solitary snakes and only group together to breed. Females are oviparous (egg-laying) and lay 10–40 eggs at a time either in a tree hollow or a burrow deserted by another animal. They then coil around them and use muscular contractions to increase their body temperature and keep the eggs warm. Young are around 30 cm long at birth. They can live for up to 20 years and reach maturity at around three years of age.

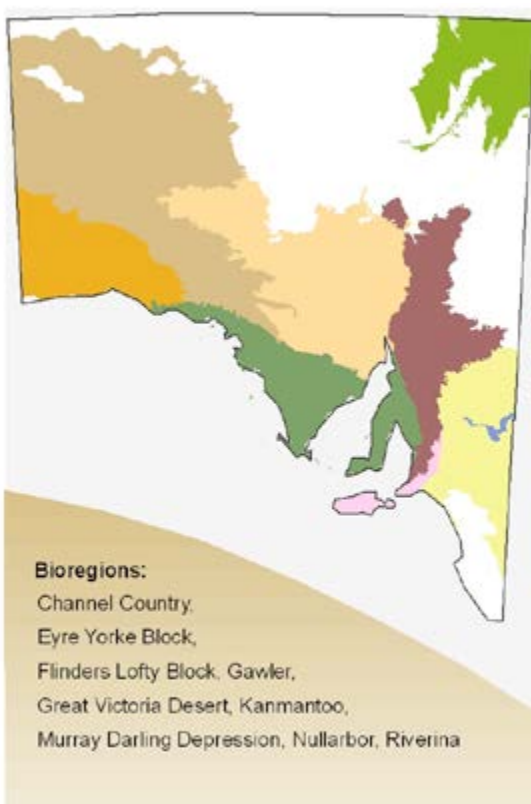
Habitat

They are found in areas of Australia, Indonesia and New Guinea. Once widespread in south-east Australia, they have steadily declined in number. In the wild they are often associated with River Red Gum habitat, but can also be found in rocky areas and other habitats.

Carpet Pythons sometimes shelter in roof spaces and pump houses and provide a natural vermin control service as they eat rats and mice.

Threats

Carpet Pythons are taken from the wild for the pet trade and if not looked after properly many die in captivity. In the wild they are preyed upon by foxes and dogs. They are also threatened by habitat loss (e.g. loss of River Red Gums along the River Murray) and also by a reduction in their prey.



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.



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They have a highly sensitive heat-detecting organ on the scales of the lower jaw (Jacobsons or Vomeronasal organ). This gives them a thermal image of warm-blooded creatures in the dark.

Conservation

You can help the Carpet Python by:

- not disturbing them – if you see a Carpet Python in the wild, just look from a distance
- not killing snakes unnecessarily if you come across one in or around home – call someone to take it away for you
- visiting Cleland Wildlife Park to see and find out more about Carpet Pythons and other native animals.



Photo by Tony Robinson

Carpet Python

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524



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