

Angolan Python

Class: Reptilia. **Order:** Squamata. **Family:** Pythonidae.

Other names: Anchieta's dwarf python

Physical Description: Reddish-brown to brown (almost black), overlaid with irregular white or cream bands and spots. Belly is yellowish. Head is covered by a large, reddish-brown triangular marking bordered on the sides by creamy white, black-edged bands. The scales have a beaded texture, feeling like hundreds of tiny pearls. Up to 6 feet in length



The **Pythonidae**, commonly known as **pythons**, from the Greek word *python*, are a family of non-venomous snakes found in Africa, Asia and Australia. Among its members are some of the largest snakes in the world. The reticulated python has been recorded at over 22 feet in length! There are about 30 species of pythons worldwide.

Diet in the Wild: Small mammals and ground birds.

Diet at the Zoo: Rodents.

Habitat & Range: Native to Africa, Southern Angola to Northern Namibia. Habitat consists of rocky outcroppings, riverine bush, or areas strewn with rocks in open brush or grasslands.

Life Span: N/A

Perils in the wild: Predators such as birds of prey, small mammals and other reptiles all can prey on young snakes of any species. Human activity can also have a negative effect on snakes in the wild.

Physical Adaptations:

- They have heat sensitive pits, five on each side of the head, located on the upper lip.
- Angolan pythons have a **Jacobson's organ**, pair of pit-like organs on the roof of the mouth that are lined with olfactory cells and nerves that interpret chemical stimuli in an animal's surroundings.
- Their forked tongue, flickering through the air, picks up scent particles and conveys them to the roof of their mouth

Behavioral Adaptations:

- Angolan pythons are **diurnal** in habit.
- Like most snakes, pythons are mainly solitary.
- They shelter in small caves, overhanging rocks and crevices. When threatened, they roll up into a ball, tucking the head so it is concealed, much like ball pythons.

Reproduction and Development:

- Angolan pythons are **oviparous**, laying small clutches of 4-5 eggs. It is not known whether or not the females incubate the eggs as other pythons do. The eggs hatch after about 70 days. Hatchlings are 17-18 inches long.

Additional Information:

- Not much is known about these snakes. Being found in such a small geographic area, generally away from human habitation, they have rarely been seen let alone studied. They are the national snake of Namibia, and are not allowed to be exported. There are not many in captivity. They are closely related to the Royal python also known as Ball python.
- **Are boas or and python family?**
Some herpetologists (a scientist who studies snakes) divide the pythons and boas into separate families or subfamilies. Which ever classification scheme one adheres to, the boas and pythons are closely related snakes. What is similar is that they are all primitive snakes with similar physical characteristics. What is different is the New World boas are bear live young which eggs have hatched internally, described as **ovoviviparous**, while the Old World pythons are egg laying or **oviparous**.

Ecological Role of Reptiles:

- Snakes play an important role as both prey and predator in ecosystems all over the world. They can be very important in regulating the populations of pest species such as rodents which are common around human activity.
- Don't buy pets if you don't know where they are from – ongoing trade in reptile products has a huge effect on the numbers of valuable species in the wild. Even buying tropical species from legal sources increases demand and encourages illegal trading.

Conservation Status:

Least Concern; IUCN 2013

The Angolan python has been assessed as Least Concern. This species has a wide distribution in unpopulated areas. While this species is considered rare and is sought for the pet trade, this threat is believed to be under control. Its remote range and presence in protected areas means this species is stable and unlikely to be globally threatened. Further research into harvest levels, particularly into the extent of illegal collecting, is recommended.

Conservation Efforts:

Parts of this species' distribution range coincide with protected areas. Further research into the harvest levels of this species is suggested.

Glossary: List of definitions of the most important recurrent technical terms used in the text.

diurnal – Active during the daytime.

Jacobson's organ- A pair of pit-like organs on the roof of the mouth that are lined with olfactory cells and nerves that interpret chemical stimuli in an animal's surroundings.

pythonidae- The family level of classification snakes described as pythons.

oviparous/ oviparity - Reproduction in which the eggs are released by the female; development of the offspring occurs outside the maternal body. Adj., oviparous

Sources:

- Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens
- <http://www.backwaterreptiles.com>
- Hickman, C.P. Roberts, L.S. 1994. Biology of Animals
- Halliday, T. Adler, K. 1986. The Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians.