



\*Lesley Marshall

## Angolan Python (*Python anchietae*)

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### Amazing Additions from Angola

Also known as the Anchieta's Dwarf Python, the Angolan python is a species of heavy bodied, small python found in South Africa, named after the Portuguese naturalist and explorer Jose Alberto de Oliveira Anchieta. This species' dorsal coloration, with its small, beadlike scales ranges from a reddish brown, brown, or blackish in color with variable amounts of whitish, yellowish, or cream colored irregular dorsal bands, bars, spots, and blotches, and is the only species of python with small beadlike head scales. Their ventrals or undersides tend to be paler yellowish in color.

Ranging from southern Angola to northern Namibia, and a seldom seen species in the wild, or in captivity, Angolan pythons are similar to, and closely related in habits and natural history to the more well known Ball or Royal Python (*Python regius*). Angolan pythons are primarily terrestrial, but can also climb well and are nocturnal or crepuscular in their foraging habits.

### Taxonomy

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Squamata

**Suborder:** Serpentes

**Infraorder:** Alethinophidia

**Family:** Pythonidae

**Genus:** Python

**Species:** *Python anchietae*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Angolan pythons can attain longevity of at least 20 to 25 years or more. Up to 40 years is not unheard of as well.

## **Distribution and Habitat**

The Angolan python is a unique species of small to medium sized, terrestrial python indigenous to southern and southwestern Africa. More specifically, this species of python occurs from southern Angola, to northern and central Namibia. Within this range, Angolan pythons occupy primarily terrestrial environments, namely arid to semi-arid, rocky grasslands, to savannahs, open scrublands and brushlands, to semi-deserts. Angolan pythons especially favor rocky habitats near permanent to semi-permanent wetlands and other bodies of water such as lakes, streams, rivers, and marsh to swamplands, where they thermoregulate and seek shelter in small caves or caverns, rock crevices, and overhangs or rock outcroppings.

## **Origin/History**

Python anchietae Bocage, 1887.

Angolan pythons have historically been relatively rare in the pet trade and herpetoculture due to their native country of origin, Angola, having been at civil war, making the area difficult and dangerous for exporters to access. Even to this day, after Angola's civil war had ended, the country would continue to be potentially dangerous to access due to the threat of active mines still present, which could be a reason why the species still to this day is seldom imported.

## **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

## **Size**

Angolan pythons range from 8 to 12 inches as hatchlings, and 4 to 6 feet, or 48 to 72 inches as most adults.

## **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial.*** Housing must be sealed, secure, and escape proof. Hatchling Angolan pythons can be housed in a 10 to 20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult Angolan pythons should be housed in a minimum of a 40 to 55 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Angolan pythons are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height. Provide a substrate that can enable burrowing or hiding such as fine aspen shavings, cypress mulch, or coconut fibers. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide additional basking and hiding opportunities using live or artificial foliage, rocks, logs, driftwood, or other hides. Also be sure to include a sturdy water bowl or dish as well.

## **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized UTH (or tank heating pad), ceramic or radiant heat emitter, or incandescent, UVA/UVB, or other heat producing bulb. Ideal temperatures for Angolan pythons range from 75 to 82 degrees F on the cool side and 86 to 92 degrees F on the warm side. Most species of snakes have fairly simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Angolan pythons should be maintained at relatively moderate to slightly high relative humidity levels, which may range from about 50 to 60%, and with additional humid hides or retreats to assist with shedding and overall health.

## **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Carnivorous;*** In the wild, Angolan pythons are carnivorous, and will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, small birds, and other smaller vertebrates. In captivity, Angolan pythons can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. In most circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed rodents acquired from a reputable source, as offering live rodents to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the rodent bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder rodent sizes for your snake is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the snake's widest point. It should also be noted that many snakes may refuse food for longer periods of time over several weeks or months, especially in the fall and winter months or if several other husbandry conditions are not being met. While this can be alarming to new pet owners, it is oftentimes normal, but their overall health and weight should be monitored during these times to make sure they do not lose weight or otherwise deteriorate. Most snakes typically are fed whole prey items, and do not usually require additional calcium or vitamin D3 supplementation unless otherwise directed. Their feeding frequency will also depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

As with many snakes, hatchling and juvenile Angolan pythons may initially be nervous and defensive. An agitated Angolan python may hiss and attempt to strike. Handle your Angolan python gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Although commonly believed to be similar in temperament to ball pythons, Angolan pythons do possess some behavioral, as well as morphological differences, one being they are more active pythons that are less likely to "ball" themselves up in defense. Nonetheless, Angolan pythons are often a docile species that can make for an excellent python to maintain for anyone who is seeking a less common species.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

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