



*Rebecca Wyman/RAW Reptiles



*Photo Credit: Inland Reptile

Carpet and Centralian Pythons (*Morelia spilota* ssp.) and (*Morelia bredli*)

Resembling Oriental Artwork

Carpet pythons are a medium sized to large, slender bodied semi arboreal (tree dwelling) species of python with a brown, black, reddish, or olive black ground color and an intricate patterning of creams, tans, yellows, golds, or light brown depending on species and subspecies. Carpet pythons are so named for their beautiful and intricate patterning, which is said to resemble that of Oriental carpets. Carpet pythons are powerful and active climbers with prehensile tails, and will do so to seek refuge and in search of smaller prey such as small reptiles, birds, and small mammals. Subspecies of carpet pythons include the Coastal Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota mcdowelli*), Diamond Python (*Morelia spilota spilota*), Northwestern, Papuan, or Irian Jayan Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota variegata*), Jungle Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota cheynei*), and the Centralian, or Bredl's Python (which has since elevated to species status), *Morelia bredli*.

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: *Morelia*

Species: *Morelia spilota** and *Morelia bredli**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, carpet pythons can attain longevity of 20 to 25 years or more in captivity. Up to 35 to 40 years is also not uncommon.

Distribution and Habitat

Carpet and Centralian pythons consist of several species and subspecies of medium sized, terrestrial to semi-arboreal Indo-Australian pythons indigenous to a wide range of New Guinea and Australia except perhaps the most arid western and central regions of Australia. While the

precise ranges are largely dependent upon the exact species, subspecies, and locality, these species of pythons generally occur throughout most of mainland Australia, from Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales. In Indonesia, species occur from southern to southwestern New Guinea, Papua New Guinea, and its surrounding islands and specific localities. The Bredl's, or Centralian python is perhaps the most arid-dwelling member of this species complex, occurring in the more arid to semi-arid regions of central Australia in the southern Northern Territory and northern South Australia.

Within this range, carpet pythons occupy a wide variety of primarily terrestrial to semi-arboreal environments, depending on the species, subspecies, and their range. Generally, however, carpet pythons can occur from tropical to sub-tropical rainforests and other tropical forests and woodlands, to more open savannahs and grasslands, agricultural and cultivated areas, near residential, suburban areas, and other areas of human habitation, to coastal tropical forests and other coastal areas, to more arid to semi-arid, rocky deserts, semi-deserts, to scrublands. These habitats are especially favored if they provide ample climbing, thermoregulating, and foraging opportunities in the form of trees, tall shrubs and other above ground debris, cliff faces and other rocky outcroppings, and other, manmade structures and buildings.

Origin/History

Morelia spilota (Lacépède, 1804); *Morelia bredli* (Gow, 1981). Subspecies would have other first describing authors and years attributed to them.

The first importation of carpet pythons to the United States is not well documented, but it is known that they were first imported to the United Kingdom in the early 1970s. From there, they were likely imported to other countries. Australia would then legally prohibit exportation of all indigenous wildlife by the mid-1970's, although importation from Indonesia and New Guinea of some subspecies still occurs occasionally. Today, however, carpet pythons are well established as captive-bred specimens, and are also available in many different color and pattern morphs since the 1990's.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Carpet and diamond pythons range from about 10 to 15 inches as hatchlings, and 4 ½ to 9 feet, or 54 to 108 inches as adults depending on the species. Some subspecies, such as the coastal carpet pythons, have the potential to reach larger sizes up to 12 to 13 feet, or 144 to 156 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Semi-Arboreal. Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Hatchling carpet pythons can be started out in a 10 to 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but will soon require larger accommodations. If glass enclosures are used at any point, be sure that the enclosure retains sufficient humidity. Many of the commercially made plastic or fiberglass enclosures, or otherwise custom-designed enclosures that can retain heat and humidity well are perhaps the best and most practical enclosures to use to house mid to large sized boas and pythons. Depending on the age and size of the animal, a four to six foot by two foot enclosure or larger is required. Carpet pythons can be maintained on a substrate of cage liner material, cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, or sphagnum fir mixtures, but always ensure that the substrate does not become too damp or moist. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Carpet pythons will also require a large sturdy water dish or tub that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed regularly, especially if dirtied. Providing an adequately sized hidebox, artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, logs, driftwood, branches, and other cage furnishings can also provide additional hiding, climbing, perching, and basking

opportunities. Carpet pythons are semi-arboreal, and will also benefit from cage height and some additional climbing opportunities as well as floor space.

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 carpet, diamond, and Centralian pythons range from 75 to 80 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. Carpet pythons should be maintained at relatively moderate to high relative humidity levels, which may range from about 40 to 70%, which can vary somewhat depending on the species, subspecies, and locality, and with additional humid hides or retreats to assist with shedding and overall health.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Carnivorous; In the wild, carpet, diamond, and Centralian pythons are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small mammals, birds, amphibians, and other reptiles that they can ambush, locate, and consume. In captivity, carpet pythons can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. Many carpet pythons can be finicky eaters, however, and may prefer mice over rats, or vice versa. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed prey animals acquired from a reputable source, as offering live animals to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the prey item bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder prey item 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 these things can be alarming, 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 carpet pythons are often initially more nervous and nippy. Handle your carpet python gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most carpet pythons will settle down considerably, but are active and inquisitive snakes as they become older, although some may remain somewhat nippy.

****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

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