



## Green Tree Python *Morelia viridis*

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- Green tree pythons are endemic to the tropical rainforests of northern and northeastern Australia as well as Papa New Guinea (and surrounding islands).
- This species is a medium sized arboreal snake that typically attains a vibrant green coloration as adults with bluish to whitish flecks and markings. Blue and yellowish adult phases are also seen.
- This species undergoes a drastic ontogenetic color change from reddish brown or yellow as juveniles to their adult coloration mentioned above.
- If provided the proper care, green tree pythons can attain longevity of 20-25 years or more.

### **Size**

Ranges from 8-10 inches as hatchlings. Most adult green tree pythons are 4 to 6 ½ feet in length.

### **Housing**

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Green tree pythons are an arboreal species, which must be taken into account before acquiring one. Hatchlings can be started out in an approximately 12" x 12" x 12" tub or similar sized glass, plastic, or injection molded enclosure with front opening viewable doors. Enclosure size at a minimum for an adult green tree python should be roughly 24" x 24" x 24" to 36" x 24" x 24". Substrates that can be used include newspaper or paper towel, orchard bark, or cypress mulch. Provide a water bowl at the bottom of the enclosure, and ample horizontal branches and/or perches (which can also be PVC pipes or tubing) for climbing, perching, and for allowing the animal to select its preferred thermal gradient.

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for these pythons (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for boas range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 86-88 degrees F on the warm side. Regular misting is also beneficial for this species, which should be maintained 40-70% humidity.

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 2-3 months.

### **Feeding/Diet**

In the wild, green tree pythons will prey upon a variety of animals including rodents and other small to medium sized mammals, birds, and lizards.

Most young pythons are large enough to be started off on weanling mice or weanling rats once per 5-7 days. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult pythons can be fed medium to large adult rats once every 14 days (or bi weekly). A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

### **Handling**

Hatchling green tree pythons have a delicate skeletal structure, and must be handled sparingly to prevent accidental injury to the animal. These pythons have long had a negative reputation for being mean or nasty; however, this notion is slowly changing as more animals are becoming captive born. This is a species that often responds well to calm and deliberate handling

by removing the perch from the enclosure with the animal first, and then allowing it to voluntarily move from perch to hands from underneath. Forcing the animal from its enclosure will cause injury and/or further stress to the animal. While many green tree pythons can be handled for short periods of time in this manner, they are a species that, in general, are still less readily handle able than a ball python or Boa constrictor, for example.

**\*\*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\*\***