



\*Dr. Michael Wenninger/W Reptiles

## Reticulated Python (*Python/Broghammerus reticulatus*)

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### The King of Constrictors

Reticulated pythons are a large, but relatively slender bodied species of terrestrial to semi-arboreal python named for their light colored geometric “reticulate” pattern bordered in black on a silver, yellowish, to gray background. Reticulated pythons are also known for being longest known species of snake in the world, with some anecdotal records of them nearing 28 feet (although these sizes are highly unusual). As with most other large constrictor species, reticulated pythons are largely sedentary ambush predators of small to large mammals, birds, and reptiles, although they are still more active, alert, intelligent, and perceptive than most other large snake species. Reticulated pythons have long had an undeserved negative reputation for being aggressive and poorly suited for captivity, although this has now changed to a large degree as they are now being bred and produced in captivity with regularity. Reticulated pythons and other large constrictor species are a controlled, regulated, or prohibited species in some states. Always check any applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances that may pertain to the specific possession of this species. While these snakes certainly are not for everyone, with the correct level of knowledge and experience, can make for an undisputed and rewarding species to work with in captivity, particularly as many more color and pattern morphs become available, including tiger, albino, pied/pie-bald, golden child, sunfire, and many others become available.

### 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/Broghammerus

**Species:** *Python/Broghammerus reticulatus*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### Lifespan and Longevity

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

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### **Distribution and Habitat**

Reticulated pythons can be a common species of snake that naturally occur in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Within this range, they can occur in tropical to sub-tropical forests and woodlands to grasslands, and are often found near rivers, streams, swamps, and other nearby wetlands.

### **Conservation Status**

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate (for Dwarf and Super Dwarf varieties) to Advanced (for Mainland varieties).

### **Size**

Reticulated pythons range from 18 to 24 inches as hatchlings. As adults, they can range in size from 12 to 23 feet on average for adults, or 144 to 276 inches depending on their sex, age, and overall husbandry and growth rates. Males are dimorphic, and are usually slightly smaller than females. Some dwarf localities are also known to remain at smaller sizes. Dwarf reticulated pythons typically range from 9 to 13 feet, or 108 to 156 inches, while some super dwarf localities only reach 6 to 7 feet, or 72 to 84 inches as adults. **Always be sure to consider the potential adult size and long term commitment of keeping and housing a reticulated python or any other large snake prior to obtaining one as part of being a responsible reptile or other pet owner!**

### **Housing and Enclosure**

Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Hatchling reticulated pythons can be started out in a 40 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 eight foot by three foot enclosure or larger is required, depending on dwarf, super dwarf, or mainland localities. Reticulated 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. Reticulated 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, and other cage furnishings can also provide additional hiding and basking opportunities. Reticulated pythons are primarily terrestrial, and floor space is more important than height.

### **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 reticulated 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

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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.

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

***Carnivorous;*** In the wild, reticulated pythons are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small to large mammals, birds, and other reptiles that they can ambush and consume. In captivity, reticulated pythons can be given feeder rodents or rabbits of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. Larger feeder or prey items for exceptionally large pythons can include prey items such as large rabbits, and even poultry, pigs, and other pre-killed livestock, which can also often be obtained through alternative means through local wholesalers, meat, or agricultural suppliers in one's area. 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 reticulated pythons are often initially more nervous and defensive. They may gape and hiss, and attempt to bite what they perceive to be a threat or a predator. Handle them gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Reticulated pythons have held a negative reputation for being nasty and difficult to handle, although this is based largely on initial imports, and a growth in captive breeding has produced far more traceable and workable animals. Given regular handling and interaction, retics can make for very rewarding animals to keep for the right individuals, although they do often tend to be a more active and flighty large constrictor species than Burmese pythons for example.

Also remember to practice safe handling with any of the large constrictors by never placing or allowing a larger snake around the neck when handling a reticulated python and **please follow safe and common sense handling practices when keeping or working with these large snakes.**

\*\*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 the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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