



Get to know Western Australia's fauna



APPROVED

Woma Python *Aspidites ramsayi* (Macleay, 1882)



Photo: R. Syme

Size

Averages 1.5 m total length, although individuals have been reported to 2.7 m in length

Subspecies

None recognised.

Description

Distinguished from other Australian pythons in possessing a narrow head rather than a broad head distinct from the body. Grey, olive, brown or rich red-brown above, often lighter on sides, usually with several darker olive, brown to black cross-bands which are normally narrower than the lighter interspaces. These bands may fade with age. Belly cream to yellow, with numerous pink or brown blotches.

Other Common Names

Sand Python, Ramsay's Python

Distribution

Populations extend from central Australia into the south-western edge of Queensland, and into northern South Australia. Other populations are known from the Pilbara coast north to the Eighty-mile Beach area and south-west Western Australia from Cape Peron south and east to the eastern Goldfields.

There are very few recent records of the Woma within the southern parts of its range.

For further information regarding the distribution of this species please refer to www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au

Habitat

The Woma occurs in the arid zones of Western Australia, favouring open myrtaceous heath on sand plains, and dune fields dominated by spinifex (*Triodia* spp.).

Behaviour

A nocturnal, terrestrial python, it shelters in hollow logs, animal burrows or thick vegetation during the day. Both sexes have small spurs that are used to stimulate mating.

Diet

The diet includes a variety of terrestrial vertebrates (small mammals, ground birds, lizards).

Breeding

Based on a few captive individuals, mating occurs from May to August. Eggs are deposited in September and October, and hatching occurs two-to-three months later. Two females have been found to shed their skin 23 days before depositing eggs. The average clutch size in captivity is 14 eggs (range 5-19 eggs), though a clutch of 22 eggs has been recorded. Incubation lasts approximately 57 days.

Threatening processes

Populations have been affected by clearing of habitat for agricultural development and grazing. There is a significant possibility that fox predation has contributed to population decline.

Conservation status

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species
Endangered (Version 2.3)

Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950
Schedule 4 – Other specially protected fauna

Management

- Survey known and potential habitat within and outside reserves for populations of Woma.
- Develop and promote guidelines and provide incentives for landowners and users to reduce the impact of current land use practices on this species.

Other interesting facts

- The Woma was, and still is, a prized food item of desert Aboriginal people. Hunters follow the track of a Woma to its burrow and then dig out the prized meal.

Selected references

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Cogger H.G. (1992). *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. Reed Books Australia.

Pearson, D. (1994-95). *Pythons - Masters of the waiting game*. *Landscape* 10(2): 17.

Last updated 8 February 2012, for further enquiries please contact fauna@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Further information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the department's website for the latest information: www.dec.wa.gov.au.



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