



STUDENT FACT SHEET

WOMA PYTHON *Aspidites Ramsayi*

The Woma Python is a nocturnal snake that is usually quiet and shy, mostly seen at dusk or during warmer nights. It is rarely seen and has a patchy distribution in South Australia, mostly in the north-east of the state. It eats lizards, snakes, birds and small mammals (including dingo pups and young rabbits). Woma Pythons wiggle their tail to distract initially cautious prey and then attract it to within striking distance. The python then coils around the prey, constricting it until it finally dies.

IDENTIFICATION

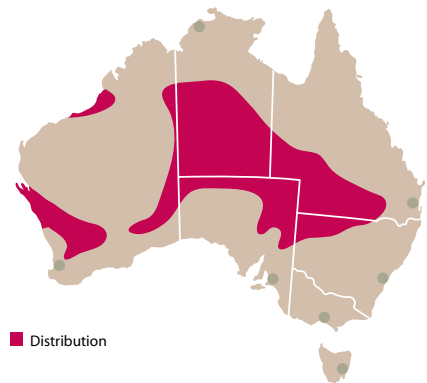
The Woma Python can grow to 2.7 metres in total length and weigh up to 5.8kg. The body is a yellowish brown to yellowish white with many wavy brownish bands that join along the back. Juveniles are more prominently patterned and coloured than older animals.

Woma Pythons can be confused with the Mulga (King Brown) Snake or Western Brown Snakes. Woma Pythons can be distinguished by the shape of the head, which is rounded near the eyes but narrower at the snout.

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

Woma Pythons are found in desert dunefields and on sandy plains, usually with hummock grasses but also other natural vegetation. The majority of recent sightings of Woma Pythons in South

Australia have come from sandy areas in the north-east of the state, predominantly along the Birdsville and Strzelecki Tracks.



POTENTIAL THREATS TO WOMA PYTHONS

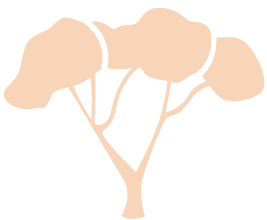
Land clearance and introduced predators have resulted in significant declines of the Woma Python in central northern New South Wales and the south east of Queensland, and is near extinction in southwestern Western Australia. Woma Pythons compete with cats and foxes and may also be eaten by these species, particularly when the snakes are still young and small. Their tendency to shelter in rabbit burrows may lead to them being unintentionally killed by rabbit ripping and fumigation.

FOCUS QUESTION

How do people pose a threat to Woma Pythons?



Australian Government



Woma Python. Photograph by Harald Ehmann.



Woma Python. Photograph by John Read.





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INLAND TAIPAN

Oxyuranus microlepidotus

The Inland Taipan has the most potent venom of any land snake on earth, but fortunately it is usually quite shy and has a placid disposition. It may not attempt to escape when approached quietly, but caution should be exercised and a safe distance maintained as it can inflict a potentially fatal bite.

Inland Taipans feed on small to medium sized mammals but seem to show a preference for rodents, like the Long-haired Rat and Plains Rat. When hunting, Taipans kill their prey by delivering a fatal dose of venom with a single bite. They then retreat and return once the animal has died.

IDENTIFICATION

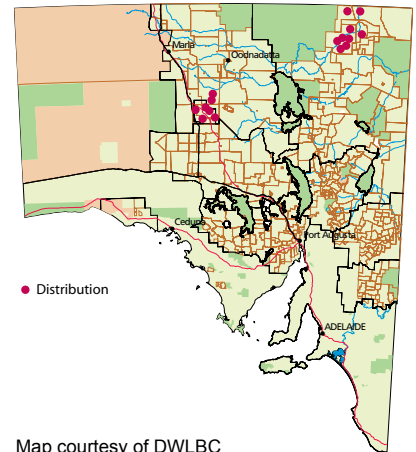
The Inland Taipan is usually active on the surface in the morning, basking and foraging in and near soil cracks. In cooler weather it is active in the afternoon and in hot weather it becomes nocturnal.

The round-snouted head and neck are darker than the body (glossy black in winter, dark brown in summer). The back, sides and tail are various shades of brown with many scales having a wide blackish lower front edge.

The belly is cream to yellow with indistinct reddish blotches. All scales are smooth and very glossy.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION

The Inland Taipan is recorded from flood plains with deep-cracking clays and loams, and so-called black soils. It is also found in the adjoining gibber plains, dunes and rocky outcrops of the Cooper and Diamantina Creeks and their tributaries near Coober Pedy. Taipans shelter in rat burrows and in deep soil cracks.



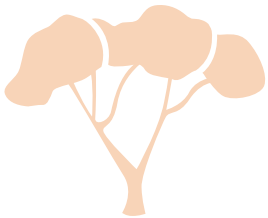
Map courtesy of DWLBC

POTENTIAL THREATS TO INLAND TAIPAN

The Inland Taipan is thought to have disappeared from some parts of its former range interstate. Being a top-level predator it is vulnerable to the risks of reduced prey availability.



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FOCUS QUESTION

When does the Inland Taipan hunt for its food?

Inland Taipans. Photographs by John Read.

