

Black Headed Python

Aspidites melanocephalus

This spectacular-looking snake has an almost purple/black head and neck. Like the Woma, it is banded but more predominantly with creamy white or grey background scales.

must know

Black Headed Pythons are largely terrestrial but may live and hunt up on rocky outcrops or in rodent burrows. From a secure hole or ledge, they expose only their black head to absorb the radiant heat from the sun and thermoregulate effectively without revealing much of their body to potential prey or predators. Dark colours, such as black, absorb heat more effectively than lighter colours.

Habitat and behaviour

A muscular snake reaching up to 3m (10ft) but usually smaller, the Black Headed Python inhabits the northern third of the Australian continent over a vast range, living generally in more lush areas where prey is most numerous. It appears that both the Aspidities pythons share common traits. They multi-kill prey by squeezing several mammals at once and catch and eat large venomous snakes – reportedly not always asphyxiating them first but eating them alive – and are immune to the multiple bites from otherwise deadly snakes in the region.

Creating the right environment

A 120 x 45 x 45cm (48 x 18 x 18in) vivarium is ideal. Snakes should be kept separately and like a dry home with some opportunity to burrow in shredded paper, leaf litter or a similar substrate. Hiding spaces are appreciated across the heat gradient of the unit – 24–35°C (75–95°F) is a good range for this species.

Handling

Captive-reared specimens should pose no problems for handling. Initially they are often hissy but rarely bite. However, they may part-open their mouth and push your hand away when nervous. If you acquire



a young snake from captive stock, tame it quickly and accustom it to handling from an early age.

Feeding

Whilst captive specimens readily take mice or rats, wild Black Headed Pythons consume small lizards, monitors, mammals, birds and other snakes. Feed as much as they will eat over 10 minutes or so once every 12 days on average. Larger snakes will prefer rats to mice. They may go off their food if they are given a cooling option seasonally for a few months.

Breeding

The mating of entwined snakes can last for between 20 minutes and six to seven hours or more. Females produce five to ten eggs which hatch two to three months later. These should be incubated in some vermiculite, but some breeders let them stay with the parent coiled around them until they hatch.

Growing to around 3m (10ft), Black Headed Pythons are only really suitable for those keepers with a large vivarium.



A stunning and solid python, Black Heads are one of the more recently seen species available.