

CREATURE CARE SHEET

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Coastal Carpet Python

Morelia spilota mcdowelli

The coastal carpet python is possibly the most widely kept of all the carpet pythons, especially in the UK where captive bred specimens are readily available. Colouration varies considerably as specimens originating from different regions of Australia have been interbred over the years.

The Coastal Carpet is one of the larger carpet pythons species. It is slender & graceful in appearance with a thin neck. It's a little more heavy bodied than a Jungle Carpet but it's overall proportions are very similar, just bigger. Adults reach an average length of 6 - 9 feet but it is not unusual for specimens to reach 12 feet. Hatchlings are dull little snakes, monochrome miniature of their parents. They are quite slow growing & develop their adult colouration at about 2 years of age. Coastals come in a variety colours shades but initially they are patterned in rings & zigzags of light & dark areas. The light areas can vary from cream through to pale green. The dark areas vary from brown to black. If seen in the correct light they have a blue velvet sheen to their skin, this is especially apparent just after shedding. Their colouration seems to be dependent on the exact locality they originate from. Adults are normally sexually mature at 4 years of age, with females being larger than the males. They do darken in colour with age due to melanin forming in the pale areas of pattern.

Their UK availability is strictly limited to captive bred specimens.

Distribution

The Coastal Carpet Python is found along the entire eastern coast of Australia. Hence it's common name.

Housing

Adults ideally need 7 - 8 square feet of floor space. The vivarium should be equipped with at least 2 hides (one in the cool end & one in the hot end), a climbing branch & a ceramic water bowl (placed in the centre & refilled every other day). Newspaper substrates are useful as it's simple & cheap to completely replace. You can use 2 forms of heating to obtain a 30 - 25°C thermal gradient; 2 heat mats (wall mounted) & a red night bulb (guarded). Both heat sources are controlled by thermostats & checked daily. The night bulb is turned off at night which lowers the temperature by 5°C. We use a 12/12 photo period and maintain 50% humidity all year round. At shedding times you can raise the humidity to 70% which is very successful. Having arboreal tendencies, we feel it is important to offer Coastals some kind of perch.. A light guard it an absolute must with Coastal Carpets. They just love to poke their nose into anything suspended from the roof, if there's an exposed bulb, they'll find it!

Feeding.

In our experience these snakes feed ferociously on rats. Hatchlings will take fuzzies after a little coaxing. It is important that the food if offered warm & for the first feed "popping" the prey's head may be necessary to instigate a feeding response. Coastals tend to eat smaller prey than other snakes of equal size, this is mainly due to their small necks. Juveniles will readily feed on small mice, gradually progressing onto large rats by 3-4 years of age. It is a distinct advantage to convert specimens as soon as possible to take rats as large Coastal will

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need multiple mice to sustain them. Some will take to rats and others won't no matter how much you try. We defrost our food in Luke warm water & then briefly soak them in hotter water, to warm them up, directly before feeding. Our Coastals will all strike feed and are really good eaters all year round. A good, long pair of feeding tongs are essential as these snakes strike quickly and aggressively on occasion.

Summary.

The Coastal Carpet Python is one of the easiest pythons to keep. They generally have docile temperaments & are one the easier larger pythons to handle.