



THE MIGRANTS FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Opposite: An adult green python (*Morelia viridis*) in alert position.

THE GREEN PYTHON

In two small pockets of tropical rainforest growing on the Iron and McIlwraith ranges located on the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula, we can find green pythons. That is if we are very lucky! These incredibly impressive and interesting snakes moved into these habitats during the last ice age when the tip of Australia was connected to Papua New Guinea via a land bridge. During the subsequent 'drying' period, these northern Cape York refuges became separated from the nearest rainforests in the Daintree, which the green pythons did not reach.

Green pythons are very different from all other Australian pythons in many ways. Most of their lives are spent in the rainforest treetops. These snakes only descend to the ground to feed or to move between trees where the canopy is disjointed. Their bright green colouration blends well with their lush surroundings, which makes them almost invisible amongst the myriad leaves, vines and epiphytes.

Green pythons lay up to 22 eggs, and after an incubation period of about 52 days the young hatch and disperse along the rainforest edges. They move close to the ground, where