



COLOURS AND PATTERNS

DIAMOND AND CARPET PYTHONS

Scientists responsible for the classification of life forms are known as 'taxonomists' and there are basically two types: 'splitters' and 'lumpers'. The former prefer to separate similar creatures into species and subspecies even when their different characters are minute, while the 'lumpers' tend to group animals with similar features into a single species. Whichever trend you find more appealing, this group of pythons lends itself to speculations and controversy amongst taxonomists as well as serious naturalists.

Carpet and diamond pythons have identical body structures but are incredibly variable in their colouration and patterning. Their external appearance invariably resembles the colours

and general complexity of their habitat, rendering them less conspicuous to predators and prey. Just as the diamond pythons, with their yellow dots on black, grey or olive background, blend into the fern understorey of the southern forests, the dull colours of the coastal carpet pythons fuse with the earthy tones of coastal woodlands. Likewise, the brightly coloured 'jungle carpets' of north Queensland's rainforests are almost invisible amongst the multi-coloured foliage, epiphytes and lianas of these dense habitats. This group of pythons truly reflects the diversity of Australian landscapes and also demonstrates the ability to adapt and fill niches in different habitats.

Opposite: Iron Range on Cape York Peninsula, Queensland.