



WATER LOVING PYTHONS

Opposite: Olive pythons (*Liasis olivaceus*) are primarily nocturnal in habit; however, they love the morning and afternoon sun, especially in winter.

OLIVE AND WATER PYTHONS

Both the water and olive pythons, which look very similar, are usually found in or near water, and both occur in the Top End of Australia.

Olive pythons frequent wet environments less than their cousins, but in some areas they are equally at home around billabongs and streams. There they feed on waterfowl and mammals as large as wallabies when these come to the water's edge for a drink. Olive pythons often move into water to escape the heat of the day but also quickly disappear under the surface when disturbed. They are large, solidly built snakes with small,

smooth scales and slender heads but their uniform grey or olive brown colour is less vibrant than that of water pythons.

Referred to as 'rainbow serpent', the water python was first mentioned in Aboriginal lore. I have seen a freshly sloughed water python basking in the sun reflecting all the shimmering colours of the rainbow. Water pythons spend more time in water than all other Australian pythons. They forage amongst reeds or lily pads for unwary waterbirds, or in their nests for eggs or hatchlings, all of which make up a part of their diet. They also prey on small crocodiles, lizards, other snakes, bandicoots, flying foxes and rats. Water pythons are not fussy eaters!