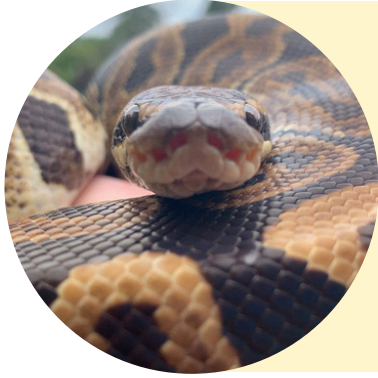




Ball Python

Atelerix albiventris



Swiftie

My birthday is **unknown**. I arrived at the Racine Zoo on **February 28, 2021**

I am an ambassador animal at the zoo and you can find me during educational programs. When I am not helping teach, I am perched up on my branches or burrowing in my enclosure.

My personality is **adventurous, curious, and easy-going**. When I am out, I am most likely exploring in and around my handler's hands and arms.

PYTHONS AT A GLANCE



- My whole body is covered in **rounded, light tan, blotchy markings** on a dark/black background.
- These markings act like my **camouflage**. It helps me blend in the trees and on the ground.



- Like all snakes, I have no legs, hips or shoulders. My body is a **long and thin spine** consisting of vertebrae.
- A human has 33 vertebrae, I have around **100-450**
- I am a **constrictor**, and use my body to hunt prey by coiling around and suffocating them.
- At the zoo, my favorite food is small rodents.



- I am covered in dry scales that help protect me from predators and allow me to live in dry places by reducing water loss.
- My scales are made from keratin, just like human hair!

ball pythons have no eyelids



Adult:
3-5 feet in length
weighs around 3.5 lbs

Avg. life expectancy in native habitats:
up to 10 years
Avg. life expectancy in human care: up to 20 years

WHERE ARE NATIVE PYTHON HABITATS LOCATED?



The ball python can be found in the African grasslands and forested regions. They spend most of their time on or under the ground in burrows of other animals. You can find them in Central and Western Africa from Senegal and Guinea to Uganda.

Python Behavior

BALLING UP

When I feel scared or threatened, I will curl my body into a ball. My head will be in the center where it's protected, and where I will prepare to strike.

If you see me like this, please give me some time to get comfortable.



FLICKING TONGUE

I use my forked tongue to sense my surroundings. I will flick my tongue to bring scents from the air to a specialized organ to process.

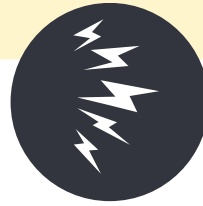
I am curious about my surroundings and exploring.



HISSING

When I am unhappy or stressed, I will make a "hissing" sound. It is a warning to potential predators that I am going to strike and bite.

I may be telling you to back off because I feel uncomfortable or nervous.



SHEDDING

Just like other reptiles, when I grow up, I need to shed my old skin or scales. Two to four times a year, I shed my entire skin.

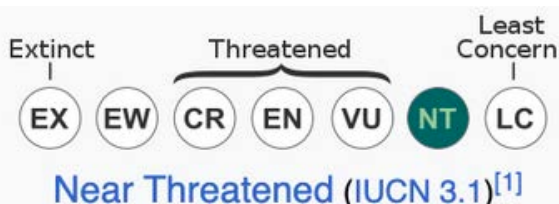
If I am turning opaque, I am getting ready to shed.



- Despite being a reptile, ball pythons have significant **parental care** to their offspring. They will **stay close** to their eggs and protect them before hatching.
- They are **ambush predators**. They will wait for an animal to pass by and **strike** and **swallow** their prey whole.
- They are **crepuscular**. They are most active at **dusk** and **dawn**.

Ball Python Conservation

Ball Pythons are listed as **Near Threatened**. Habitat loss and fragmentation for non-timber crops and pastures puts significant pressure on populations. In addition, people taking them out of the wild for the exotic pet trade is also harmful.



How can we help?

They are a popular pet, but people don't realize how large they get or how much care they need; so often times they release them into the wild, where they cause damage as an invasive animal. Make sure to do plenty of research before buying a pet to see if you can meet their care requirements.

In addition, we can also protect native snake species by leaving leaf litter during the fall to give them materials for nesting and laying eggs.