LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA MURRAYLANDS AND RIVERLAND



Murray-Darling carpet python



Scientific name: *Morelia spilota*

Common name: Murray-Darling carpet python, inland python

Status: Rare

The Murray-Darling carpet python (or inland python) was once widespread through much of south-east Australia. However, as result of habitat loss, fragmentation, illegal poaching, persecution and predation from foxes their distribution has declined.

These semi-arboreal pythons typically live along river margins, often on floodplains and rocky outcrops. They can also be found in the hollows of large river red gums and nestled in quiet corners of buildings and sheds where they happily control vermin.

Murray-Darling carpet pythons typically feed on small mammals (including rodents), frogs, birds and lizards.

Female pythons lay around 20-50 eggs every 3-4 years and incubate them for around 50-60 days. Female pythons will coil themselves around their eggs and will maintain good incubation temperatures through brief basking opportunities and via shivering motions to generate heat to warm the eggs. Upon hatching, the young pythons are completely independent and do not remain with their mother.

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This python is strikingly patterned and has a great variation in colour. Their common colouring of silver and black provides exceptional camouflage, sometimes displaying patches of maroon. Adults average 2.4 metres in length but can grow as long as 2.7 metres.



Murray-Darling carpet pythons have striking markings.

Murray-Darling carpet pythons as pets

As a non-venomous species with attractive patterns and typically placid temperament, carpet pythons have become common pets. However, they must not be taken from the wild and are a protected species. Equally, captive pet pythons should never be released into the wild due to the disease risk they can impose on wild populations.

Friend or Foe?

Being non-venomous, Murray-Darling carpet pythons pose little threat to humans. However, those unfamiliar with pythons can confuse them with other snake species. They are typically timid by nature and will prefer to stay out of sight and will only act aggressively if threatened.

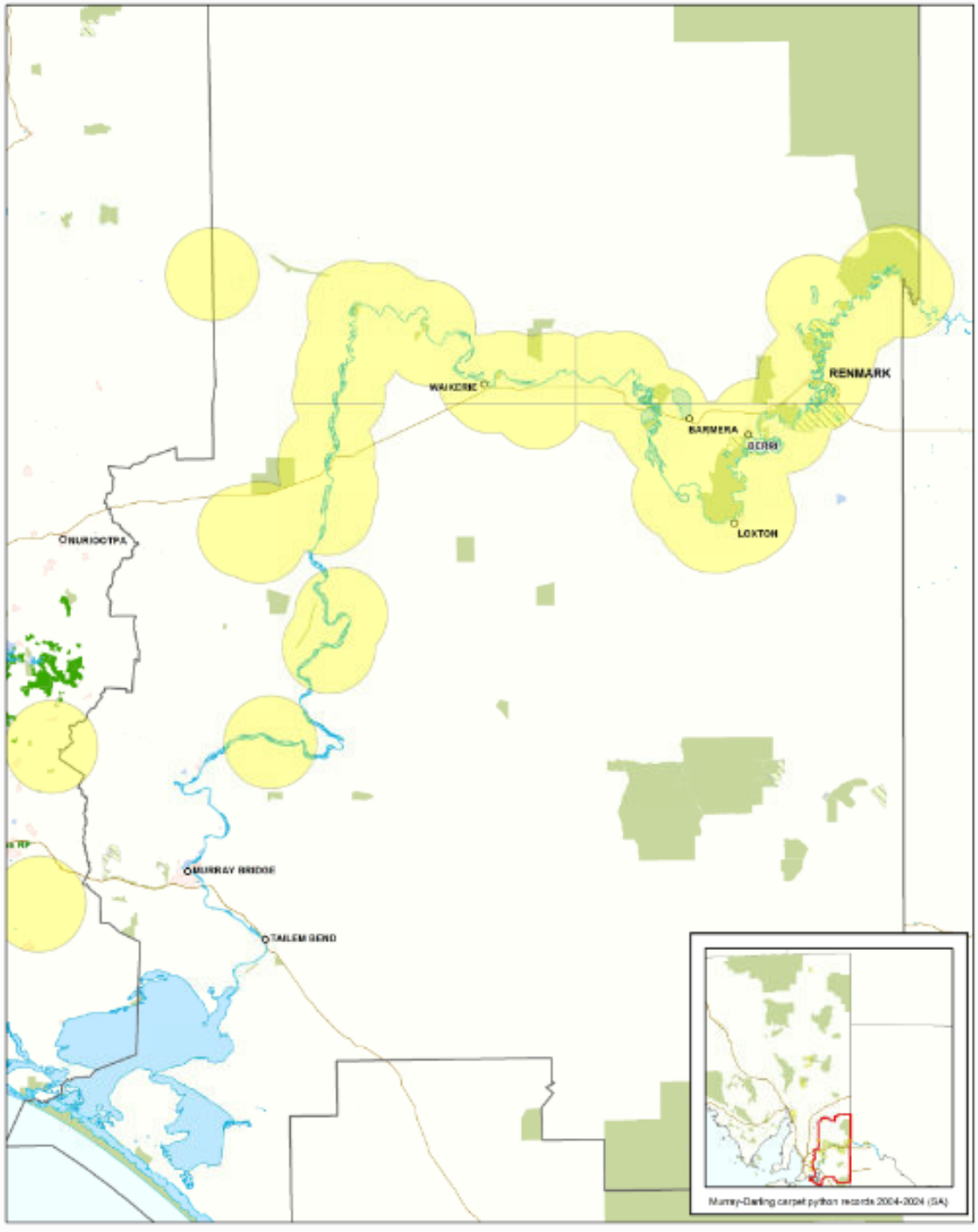
People who come across a carpet python in the wild are encouraged to observe it from a distance.

Where do Murray-Darling carpet pythons live?

Little is known about the exact current distribution of the Murray-Darling carpet python however we do know its range is now reduced and numbers have significantly declined. There are numerous

records for the species in South Australia from the Victorian border through to Blanchetown along the River Murray, but in the Murraylands there are very few records.

The continued decline in their distribution has caused concern for their future and we need the help of the community (https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/get-involved/citizen-science/help-save-the-murray-darling-carpet-python) to protect this valuable native species.



Murray-Darling carpet python sightings (2000-2024)

Why are Murray-Darling carpet pythons threatened?

The reduction of suitable habitat through fragmentation, clearing and cultivation as well as historical threat of poaching has resulted in a drastic decline in the distribution of the Murrray-Darling carpet

python in South Australia. The persistent loss of habitat along the River Murray is a significant issue for the species which typically favours riverside areas. It is also thought that predation by introduced species such as foxes and dogs have contributed to a decline in numbers.

What is being done to help Murray-Darling carpet pythons?

At present there is little up to date and accurate data regarding the distribution of Murray-Darling carpet pythons in South Australia. From 2023, ecologists from the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board have been actively searching key habitat and seeking information from the community about their sightings to improve our knowledge of the distribution and conservation needs for this important species.

Help save the Murray-Darling carpet python

If you see a Murray-Darling carpet python, please let us know. Submit your sighting on iSPYthon (https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/7f1b538a67454718bcffc8b1a7bcf9ba) or contact us with the date and location of your sighting. Even better, if safe to do so, take a photo and include it!

This project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the landscape levies.

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