Colophon

The animal on the cover of *Introducing Python* is a python—that is, a member of the *Python* genus, which consists of 10 recognized snake species. Pythons are nonvenomous, constricting snakes native to the tropics and subtropics of the Eastern Hemisphere.

Pythons vary in length, based on species and sex, from approximately 3 feet long (ball python) to reported cases of more than 20 feet long (reticulated python). They are recognizable by their flat triangular-shaped heads and long backward-curving teeth. Generally, they have a combination of brown, tan, and black skin, arranged in diamond or interlocking blotch patterns. Albino pythons are white and yellow, and while at a disadvantage in the wild, are popular in zoos and as pets.

Pythons are strong swimmers, but these snakes almost exclusively ambush prey on land or in trees, attacking with their fangs and then immediately wrapping themselves around the quarry to asphyxiate it. Unlike boas, another well-known group of constrictor snakes, pythons lay eggs rather than birth live young. The female python will brood over the eggs until they hatch, shivering with her large muscular coils to keep the eggs warm.

The Burmese python has become an invasive species in Florida, competing with the American alligator for prey and significantly reducing the number of native birds and small mammals in the Everglades. Along with increased popularity as a pet in the 1990s, it is thought that Hurricane Andrew in 1992 is responsible for allowing captive Burmese pythons into the wild by destroying a zoo and breeding facility.

Most species of python have a conservation status of Least Concern, but the Bermese (native population) and Borneo short-tailed python are currently listed as Vulnerable. Many of the animals on O'Reilly covers are endangered; all of them are important to the world.

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