African Rock Python (*Python sebae*)

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

The African rock python is Africa’s largest snake. Their long, stout body is covered in small, smooth scales that form patterned blotches that vary in color between brown, olive, chestnut, and yellow, and often join up in a broad, irregular stripe. Their triangular head contains many sharp, backwardly curved teeth. The top of their head has a distinctive dark brown “spearhead” outlined in a buff yellow, and they have triangular markings under their eyes.

**Fun Facts**

1. African rock pythons are the largest species of snake in Africa.
2. Pythons possess two functioning lungs, unlike other snakes, which have only one.
3. Pythons possess small but visible pelvic “spurs,” believed to be the vestiges of hind limbs.

**Habitat**

African rock pythons inhabit a wide range of habitats but seem to prefer woodlands and open savannas or grasslands. They are generally associated with permanent water sources.

**Diet**

Large rodents, monkeys, antelopes, fruit bats, monitor lizards, and occasionally crocodiles

**Predators**

Wild dogs, hyenas

**Behavior**

Like all pythons, the African rock python is a nonvenomous snake. They kill their prey by constriction: they grip their prey, coil around it, and tighten their grip every time their prey breathes out. Cardiac arrest rather than asphyxiation or crushing is thought to eventually kill the prey. African rock pythons are generally solitary snakes that are most often seen on the ground or in the trees. They can swim well and stay submerged for an extended period of time, giving them an advantage when hunting. While African rock pythons may be active during the day, they are primarily nocturnal.

**Breeding**

African rock pythons are oviparous. They will lay between 20 and 60 elongated eggs in a burrow, cave, or old termite mound. Females will coil around the eggs to protect them from predation and possibly to incubate them. After 10 to 15 weeks, the young hatch.

**Size**

Length: 2.75-4.5 m

**Weight**

Up to 113 kg

**Life Span:** over 12 years

**Incubation Period:** 10-15 weeks

**Average number of offspring:** 20-60 eggs laid at a time