

Anacondas and Pythons: The biggest snakes



Holy enough to be worshiped as gods in some religions, snakes also have earned a bad reputation since one appeared in the garden of Eden. But

the terror associated with snakes in the world comes from their unique ability to deliver a venomous lethal bite when threatened, rather than anything else.

All snakes found on earth are carnivores. It means they only eat meat. Small snakes usually hunt on rats, mice, frogs and small birds. They are also good at stealing eggs and babies from birds' nests. Some are cannibals, means they can kill and eat other snakes. Snakes that live in rivers and swamps can also hunt on marine animals like crabs and crayfish.

Some snakes do not have any venom at all. An anaconda is one of the largest scary non-venomous snake found in tropical South America. Although the name applies to a group of snakes, it is often used to refer only to one species in particular, the common or green anaconda, *Eunectes murinus*, which is one of the largest snakes in the world.

The dimensions that have earned the anaconda the title of king is its total body mass or its weight (the sheer physical bulk of it). The largest anaconda ever measured was almost 28 feet long with a girth of 44 inches. This anaconda wasn't weighed at the time it was caught, but researchers estimate that it must have weighed over 500 lbs which means a bit more than 225 kg. The other snake that competes with the anaconda is the Asiatic Reticulated Python (*Python reticulatus*). The python holds the world's record for the largest snake, with the longest ever measured at 33 feet. Even though the longest python is longer than the record-holding anaconda, the circumference, or girth in other words, of the anaconda is far bigger. There are uncertified reports that anacondas in the jungles of South America can grow as big as a fully grown buffalo in circumference at belly.

Anacondas in the wild spend most of their time hanging out in rivers hunting for their food. They are solitary creatures that like to live alone and hidden from congested areas and not many of them are easily seen. They are very well camouflaged in the swamps and bogs in which they thrive. There are some historical reports of early European explorers of the South American jungles seeing giant anacondas up to 100 feet long and some of the native peoples of the South American jungle have reported seeing anacondas up to 50 feet long. No one has caught and measured an anaconda anywhere near that size. It is important to note that when a dead anaconda's skeleton or skin is laid out it can be stretched very easily, expanding to much longer lengths than the snake exhibited when alive. Reports of outsized anacondas that cannot be verified are usually due to distortions in perception or a snake's skin being disproportionately stretched and inaccurately measured. Exaggeration and inability of people to accurately estimate lengths is usually behind such reports, especially for larger snakes. In fact, the larger the snake, the larger the margin of error.

Anacondas like to hang out in rivers so it would be difficult to estimate the length of one seen swimming without seeing the entire snake. Anacondas remain partly hidden in the water that makes it difficult to accurately find and document a specimen that exceeds the current world's record. Nobody would want to jump in the water after a giant anaconda and to try and measure a snake big enough to kill a human.

The Biggest Snake to Have Ever Lived:

If you think that an anaconda, big enough to swallow an antelope or crocodile whole, is big then you should know about the size of the giant snake scientists discovered in a coal mine in Columbia, South America in 2008. Fossils of an enormous snake were discovered in an open coal mine in the Amazon rainforest. Paleontologists estimated the length of the snake called Titanoboa - to be 43 feet long and estimated to weigh 2,500 pounds! Based on their findings, the scientists who identified this new species of snake said it was large enough to prey on crocodiles. Since snakes are cold-blooded, the average temperature of the Amazon had to have been 6 to 8 degrees warmer to support a snake that enormous.

Killer Snake:

Anacondas are members of the boa constrictor family of snakes. That means that they kill their prey by coiling their large, powerful bodies around their victims and squeezing until their prey suffocates or is crushed to death and dies from internal bleeding. It is a very painful way for a victim to die. Then the snake unhinges its jaw and swallows the victim whole. Anacondas are much more likely to eat aquatic creatures, such as fish. Occasionally, they have been known to eat: caimans (a relative of

the alligator), other snakes, deer, and even jaguars. Anacondas are rather slow-moving snakes, so they have to rely on stealth and the element of surprise to catch their unsuspecting prey.

Do Anacondas Bite?

Just about every species of snake on earth has teeth, but anaconda's teeth are not used for chewing. Snake's teeth are used for holding onto their prey, preventing them from escaping. Some snakes have venom in two specially designed, extra long teeth (called fangs) which they use to kill their prey. Anacondas have teeth, but they are not venomous. They rely on their enormous size and power to subdue their victims. It is possible to be bitten by an anaconda, but the bite itself would not be lethal.

Snakes as food?

Snakes are popular food in several cultures. It is common to see snakes being sold in fresh food markets in China. The most popular snake meat in the United States comes from rattlesnakes, although other types, such as python, are also available over the Internet. Rattlesnake meat is commonly eaten in the Southwest, and popular recipes include rattlesnake chili and barbecued snake meat. Other cultures generally eat their own, locally found snakes.

Snakes are considered medicinal in Chinese lore, as a "warming" food, and the blood of snakes is often mixed with liquor to boost energy. Traditional South American medicine includes dried or powdered snake meat which is believed to cure several different illnesses. Snake meat is usually said to taste like chicken, but a closer approximation is frog legs. Snake meat can be very tough if not prepared well.

Note: This article is heavily referenced from a number of internet sources and is compiled for educational purpose. We acknowledge the work done by several entities on the web.

Comprehension:

What is this article about?

Is this article informative or persuasive?

Why people are terrified by snakes?

Snakes are carnivores, herbivores or omnivores? What does it mean?

What family of snakes do anacondas and pythons belong to?

Snakes of all types are eaten in China. Name two types of snakes that are sold in South America as food?

Worshiped			
Reputation			
Appeared			
Associated			
Venomous			
Lethal			
Cannibals			
Threatened			
Stealing			
Marine			
Crabs			
Crayfish			
Venom			
Tropical			
Particular			
Stealth			
Dimensions			
Estimate			
Antelope			
Swallows			
Enormous			
Terrified			
Historical			
Traditional			
Rattlesnake			
Boost			
Unhinges			
Different			
Approximation			
Squeezing			
Amazon			
Medicinal			