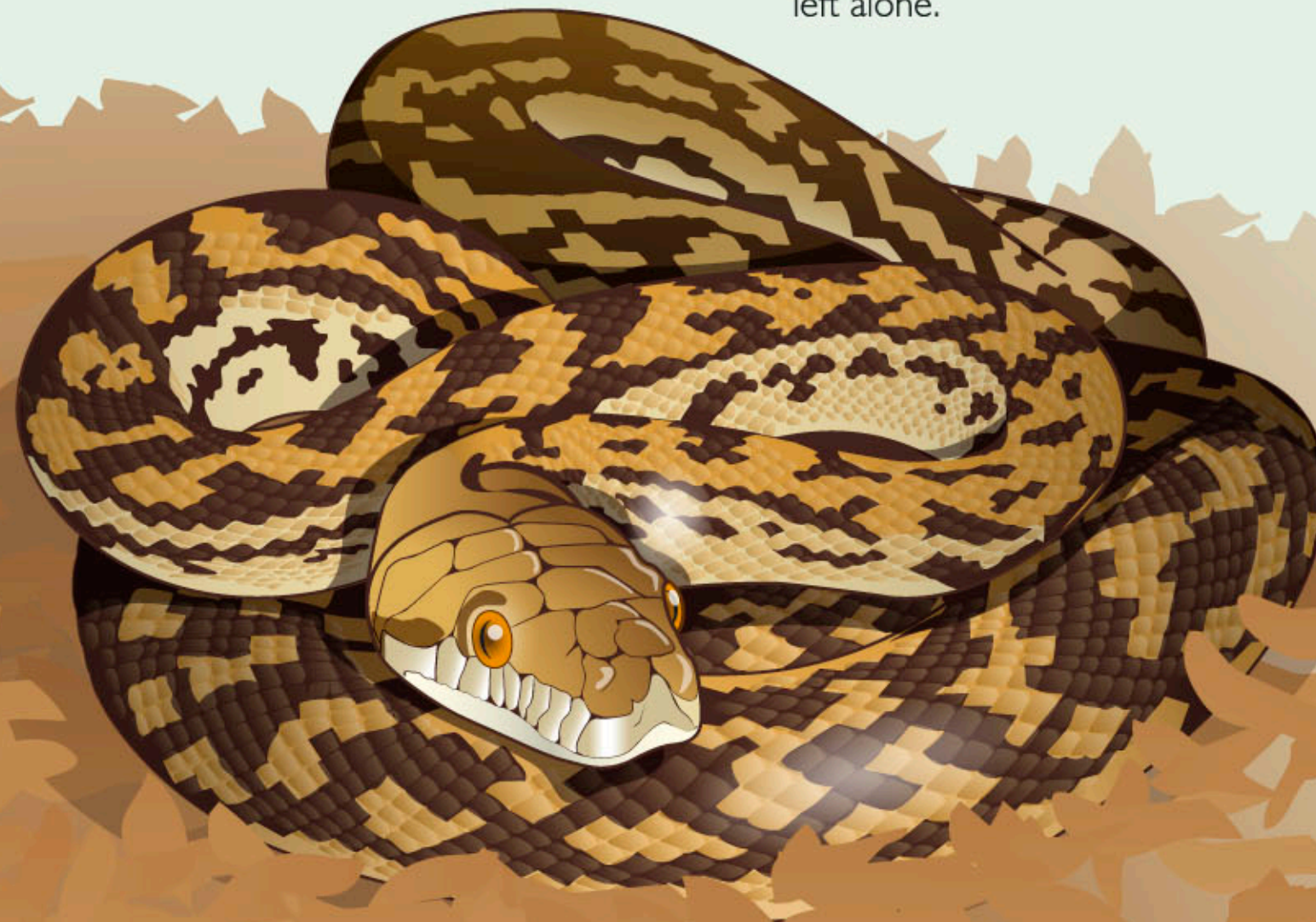


Full of Figs

Top predator

One of the main predators in the forest at Cattana Wetlands is Australia's largest snake, the Amethystine Python. They can be identified by having a big, long head and large head scales and are usually brownish in colour with angular dark blotches and an iridescent pearly sheen. While usually quite slender they can grow to around five metres.

These pythons are active at night when they seek out mammals and birds and kill their prey by constriction. While they have no venom and are therefore harmless to humans, they can inflict a painful bite and if encountered should be left alone.



Red-leaf Cluster Fig Tree

The Red-leaf Cluster Fig (*Ficus congesta*) is a feature of this section of the boardwalk. This small, mid-story tree provides a valuable food source for several animals including birds, such as figbirds and fig parrots, and mammals such as the Spectacled Flying Fox. The tree fruits throughout the year when small figs grow directly from the trunk and branches. This tree would also have been an important food source of the Southern Cassowary when it roamed this area prior to urban development.

Fig raiders

Figbirds are more conspicuous and raucous than fig parrots. They often congregate in large numbers when suitable food, such as figs and berries, are available. The bright yellow and green males stand out with their black head and red skin around each eye. This red skin becomes more vibrant during the breeding season.

Female figbirds however, are very different and are dull brown with a heavily streaked chest.

Their call is a characteristic squeaky 'see-kew'.



Male

Shy parrots

Australia's smallest parrot, the Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, is completely reliant on figs and can often be seen feeding on these fruits during the day. Although they are striking birds, with a short tail, green body and red and blue on their head and wings, they are also often difficult to see. You may glimpse them flying rapidly overhead or if you are very lucky, you can watch them blend into the foliage of the fig tree where they sit quietly devouring the fruit.



Male

Female

Illustration: Tim Parker

Wild About the Tropics