

Python attack a threat in US from invasive species

美國深受外來蟒蛇威脅

A pet Burmese python broke out of a glass cage last week and strangled to death a two-year-old girl in her bedroom in the US state of Florida.

The tragedy was the latest and most **graphic** example of a problem that has plagued the state for more than a decade: a non-native species that is wreaking havoc in the Everglades, threatening the environment, native wildlife and people.

"It's just a matter of time before one of these snakes gets to a visitor in the Florida Everglades," said Democrat Senator Bill Nelson, from Florida.

Lawmakers are **mulling over** a variety of measures to address the problem. Democrat Senator Carl Levin supports a ban on imports of Asian carp, but said the **aquatic** species plaguing his state of Michigan are no match — in size anyway — for the Burmese python, which can grow to 5.5m and has been known to eat alligators and even deer.

"I'm glad this damn python is a long way from where I live," Levin said, **eyeing** large photos that showed the python in all its menace. The photos were displayed at a hearing conducted by two Senate Environment and Public Works subcommittees.

Burmese pythons are native to southeast Asia, but they survive easily in Florida's warm, moist climate.

Some owners have freed the fast-growing pythons into the wild and a population of them has taken hold in the Everglades. Scientists also speculate that a bevy of Burmese pythons escaped in 1992 from pet shops battered by Hurricane Andrew and have been reproducing ever since.

(AFP)



美國佛羅里達州上週發生一起緬甸蟒蛇逃出玻璃櫃，將一名兩歲女童勒死在臥房中的意外。

這起悲劇是一個困擾美國十多年的問題中，最新且最活生生的例子：一種非本土品種在大沼澤地大肆破壞，對當地環境、原生野生生物和人類造成威脅。

佛州民主黨參議員比爾·尼爾森說：「佛州大沼澤地出現外來蛇類攻擊遊客事件是遲早的問題。」

國會議員正在仔細評估各種解決問題的對策。支持立法禁止亞洲鯉魚輸入的密西根州民主黨參議員卡爾·列文說，該水生生物種肆虐密西根州的規模比上緬甸蟒對佛州造成的威脅；緬甸蟒可長至五點五公尺長，而且還吞食過鱷魚，甚至成鹿。

在參議院環境暨公共工程委員會召開的一場聽證會上，列文看著展示的大型圖片說：「我很高興這種討厭的蟒蛇出沒之處離我住的地方很遠。」這些圖片中顯示該種蟒蛇造成的各種威脅。

緬甸蟒原生於東南亞，但佛州溫暖、潮濕的氣候也相當適合牠們生存。

有些飼主把這種生長快速的蟒蛇野放，結果當中一部分佔據了大沼澤地。科學家也推斷，有一群緬甸蟒是一九九二年安德魯颶風吹毀數間寵物店時逃出來的，而且在那之後便一直在該地繁殖生長。

(法新社/翻譯：袁星璽)

Top: Lebanese snake hobbyist Pierre Rizk and his Sri Lankan wife Sapa (Snake in English) watch television with two of their Indian Python snakes in their flat in Dekwaneh, east of Beirut on July 6, 2009.

PHOTO: AFP

Left: Police remove a python from a bag in order to measure it after removing it from a home in Oxford, Florida, on July 1, 2009.

PHOTO: AP

上圖：七月六日，在黎巴嫩貝魯特東部的德克瓦尼市，愛蛇人皮爾·里茲克和斯里蘭卡籍的太太莎帕（意思是「蛇」），及兩條印度蟒蛇一同在自家公寓內看電視。

照片：法新社

左圖：七月一日，佛羅里達州牛津市警方在民眾家中捕捉到一條蟒蛇後，把牠從塑膠袋中取出測量身長。

照片：美聯社

TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

1. **graphic** /'græfɪk/ adj.

寫實的 (xie3 shi2 de5)

例：We were warned that the movie had several scenes of graphic violence.
(有人警告我們那部電影中有好幾幕寫實的暴力場景。)

2. **aquatic** /ə'kwætɪk/ adj.

水生的 (shui3 sheng1 de5)，水上的 (shui3 shang4 de5)

例：Hannah is a big fan of aquatic sports.
(漢娜很迷水上運動。)

3. **eye** /aɪ/ v.

注視 (zhu4 shi4)

例：Virgil nervously eyed the knife on the counter.
(薇吉兒緊張地盯著流理台上的刀子。)

IDIOM POINT 重要片語

mull over 仔細考慮

If you are **mulling something over**, you are thinking about it. In the article the senators were thinking about what to do about non-native species.

Examples: "Sarah is still **mulling over** what to do with her tax refund," or "The judges will spend several hours **mulling over** the evidence before giving a verdict."

若你「**mull over**」某事，意思就是你在考慮某事。文章中提到，參議員正在深思要怎麼處理非本地物種問題。

例如：「莎拉還在考慮要怎麼處理退稅的事情」，或是「法官們會先花數小時審慎考慮證據後再做出裁決」。