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FAST FACTS

Common Name
Children’s Python

Scientific Name
Liasis childreni
Anteresia childreni

Colour
Base colour of brown to tan/grey with white belly, with dark to light chocolate dorsal patterns that fade or smudge with maturity. Has a beautiful iridescent sheen over the scales reflecting blue, yellow and green

Max. Size
to 1.4 metres, but usually 1.1m

Temperament
Will bite when a baby, usually very placid when older.

Ease of Care
Properly housed, these pythons are very easy to keep, and even offer the opportunity for breeding by novices.

Natural History

Childrens Pythons are a small species of python from the northern parts of Australia, ranging from Mt Isa in Queensland to the Kimberley of Western Australia. They are naturally occurring in and around rocky escarpments and outcrops, associated open woodlands and grassy plains. They are agile climbers on rock faces, small shrubs and across the ground, but do not venture into large trees. They are active hunters, feeding on small mammals, reptiles and frogs as well as bats and small birds.

Captive Husbandry

CAGING: Being a small python, they do not need overly large cages. Baby to juvenile snakes are timid animals and should be housed in a small and secretive cage (no bigger than 300 x 300 x 150 (mm), such as the DoLittle Farm Baby Python Cage. Their cage should be able to be darkened, allowing babies to relax and feel more comfortable, as well as preferably being constructed of timber so they don’t feel like “everyone is watching me”.

Sub-adult to adult snakes can be housed in a variety of cages with a minimum size of 500 x 400 x 300 (mm). As they are not a tree climber by nature, tall cages are not necessary. Timber cages should be favoured over glass, especially in temperate locations (eg Sydney)

Ventilation in their cage should not be excessive, and so retain a level of heated air in the cage.

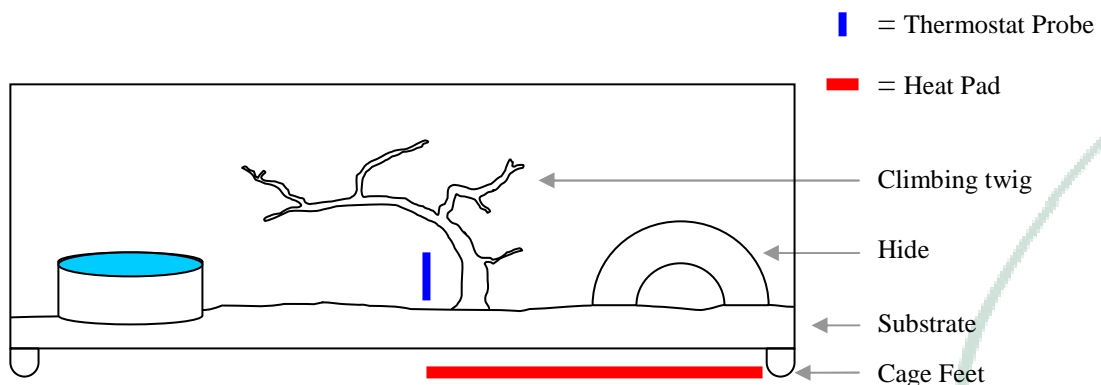
HEAT: Childrens Pythons come from a hot climate, they are ectotherms (cold blooded), and so they need a source of heat. For a baby to juvenile, this should be in the form of a heatpad or heatcord that is heating approx. 50% of the floor of the cage. For a sub-adult to adult python, this can be in the form of heatpad or heatcord for belly heat, and a heat-lamp for radiant heat. A heatlamp used for older animals will also heat the larger airspace of the cage effectively. All heating appliances should be controlled by a thermostat to avoid over heating, and monitored with a thermometer. Children’s Pythons will seek to keep their bodies at 31°C, and so will need temperatures around 34-35°C at the warm end and around 27-28°C at the cool end of the cage. Setting your thermostat at 31°C and locating your heat sources and thermostat probe as shown in Cage diagrams 1 & 2 will help you achieve this.

LIGHTING: These pythons are semi nocturnal in nature, and so will be most active when the lights are out. It is still important to have a day/night cycle in their cage of 14 hrs of day, 10 of night, which can be delivered by fluorescent lighting or by strong room lighting. The use of UV reptile lighting can have a positive effect on these animals, but the use of bulbs exceeding 5.0 UVB could be detrimental. Newly acquired or baby animals should have minimal light until they have settled into their new cage and have eaten.

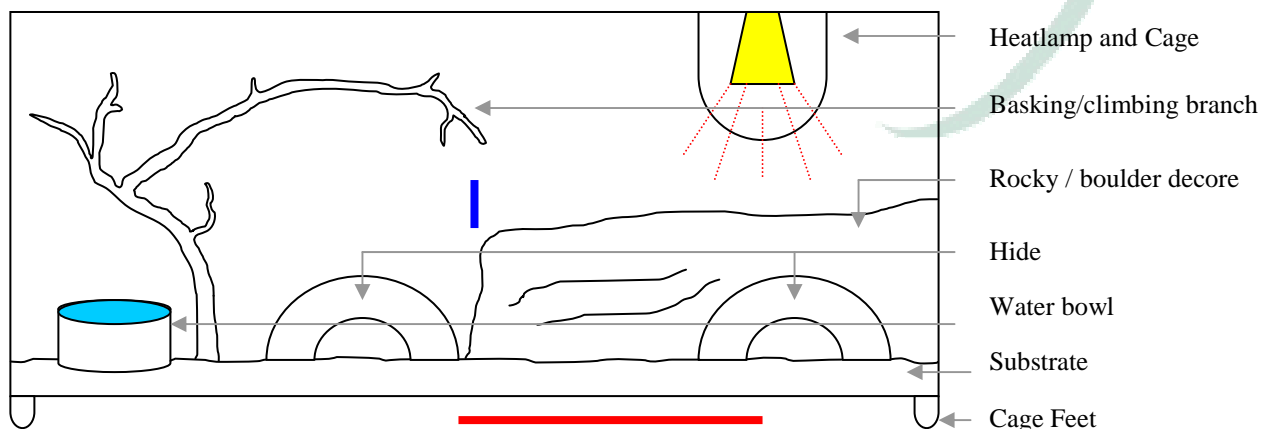
HABITAT: Childrens Pythons will use almost anything as habitat. A varied selection of caves, rocks, logs, plastic plants and similar items will all be beneficial to them. Make sure any natural wood products have as much bark as possible removed before use. Clean flooring is important, with wood shavings, barks or paper cat litters providing a clean and effective litter. All floorings should be completely changed every 4 weeks, with spot cleaning occurring weekly. All furnishings should be thoroughly scrubbed every 4 weeks, with a “change of scenery” provided at this time to keep your snake enthusiastic for new smells and new territories. Cleaning of walls, floor and furnishings should be done with a “reptile safe” cage cleaner. Don’t use household chemicals.

SETTING UP A CAGE: Below are some diagrams of how a cage should be set up. Obviously, your own artistic flair will alter how your cage looks

Baby/Juvenile Cage



Sub-Adult/Adult Cage



Biological Cycles

FEEDING: In captivity, Children’s Pythons will feed on mice. They can also feed on small quails and small rats, however we prefer that rats be avoided. Under no circumstances should small skinks or frogs be offered as food. We recommend you feed DoLittle Farm Frozen Foods, and follow this procedure;

- 1) Check that your python is warm and happy (and so is enthusiastic to feed), and is not in a shed cycle
- 2) Wash your hands
- 3) Remove your bag of food from the freezer – eg mice, unseal the bag and remove the desired amount of food. Reseal the bag and return it to the freezer
- 4) Thaw and then warm up the mouse to 38°C by placing it on a hot surface, such as a heatpad or the DVD/video player. Using a piece of paper towel under the food might be a good idea. We do not recommend you use hot water to thaw your food, and definitely don’t use the microwave.
- 5) You will need to ‘turn’ the food over at least once during thaw/warming.
- 6) When the mouse is nice and warm (as warm as your armpit - 38°C), roll the food between index finger and thumb to ensure no iceblocks remain in the abdomen of the mouse.
- 7) Wash your hands
- 8) Offer the mouse to your snake using blunt nosed feeding tweezers or with your fingers (holding the tail of the mouse). You may need to gently wiggle the mouse around to make it appealing.
- 9) Once the snake strikes the mouse, it will instantly wrap around it and squeeze. If this doesn’t occur at the strike, give the mouse a tug or two to simulate it trying to escape.
- 10) Leave the snake alone until it has finished its meal. By all means watch, but keep still.
- 11) Wash your hands and leave your snake alone for a day or two.

Feeding regularity is up to the owner, however we suggest feeding baby snakes every 5 days, and juvenile+ snakes every 7-10 days. This will obviously vary with the size of food offered and the characteristics of each individual snake.

Purchasing your food in the morning, transporting it in a cooler bag/esky, and taking it straight home, is important for maintaining quality. Always store your frozen foods in the back of the freezer, where temperature is most stable.

DEFECATION: Your snake has to get rid of its excrement just like any other animal. It will usually defecate 5-7 days after eating, and it will have 3 components; a white chalk (uric acid – urine), a discoloured conglomeration of fur (the pelt), and a dark brown stool (the poo). There will be a fair amount of fluid at the same time. Snakes feeding on Pinkies will not have the pelt in their defecation.

If you would like to make cleaning easier, take your snake out onto the grass at the 5 day mark and allow him to roam supervised for 10 minutes or so. This will usually result in him defecating on the grass.

SHEDDING: If Children’s Pythons are feeding on the correct amount of food, they will shed every 6-8 weeks (approx) when young, and 8-10 weeks (approx) when mature. The shedding process usually goes for 9 days, but is affected by temperature, with prolonged lower temperatures extending the time between sheds and the time taken to shed. The shedding process (in days) is as follows;

- Under the tail is milky. Snake refuses food
- Under body and tail are milky
- Eyes are milky, looking like it has cataracts
- Eyes milky, skin darker and wrinkly. Snake will seek out higher humidity
- Eyes are clear, body is wrinkly. Snake is usually cranky
- Snake will seek out moisture. Snake is usually cranky
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- Snake will rub its nose on something abrasive (like a rock). The skin will peel back, and he will wriggle out with slow undulations of the body. The monocle over the eyes and the nostrils will also be shed at this time. Sometimes, the hemi penes (the 2 penises of the male) will be shed also.

A snake ‘in shed’ will be reluctant to feed, and so its best not to even try until the second or third day after a shed has occurred.

LOCOMOTION: Children’s Pythons are amazing animals to watch. Their movements are graceful and fluent. They use their bodies to hold onto things while they reach and stretch for the next ‘foothold’ that they usually grab hold of with their neck. They should not be expected to hold onto large branches or other “non-natural” furnishings (remember... rocky outcrops, logs, not large trees). With the exception of a female python that is developing eggs, the belly of the snake (ventral scales) should be downwards, touching the ground or rock etc, and the back of the snake (dorsal scales) should be upwards, showing off to the world.

TONGUE FLICKING: Snakes will flick their tongue quite regularly, especially when in a place other than their cage. Flicking the tongue is their way of collecting scent molecules (and so, tasting the air). The tongue should come out and flick up and down almost too fast to see. It should be forked, and blue-ish in colour (except for albino animals). If this is not the case, your python should see a vet immediately.

As a Pet

Children’s Pythons make wonderful pets. Most of the family will be keen to get your python out and hold it and let it loose on their shoulders etc. This is all great fun, and we encourage you to do this regularly. However, care must be taken not to frighten young and baby animals. Generally speaking, we encourage owners to handle their baby pythons 1 minute per day, every day. After a week, if the python feeds, then commence handling for 2 minutes per day. After the next feed, if the python has fed, commence handling for 4 minutes per day, and providing the python continues to feed at the end of each week, continue to double the time period of handling. If at any time the snake stops feeding, and a shed cycle is not apparent, leave the python alone for a week, re feed, and if it eats, begin at the same time period you stopped on.

Sub adult to adult pythons will love to get outside in the sun, exploring on the grass and through the garden. **WATCH YOUR ANIMAL CAREFULLY.** You may find your snake loves a certain spot, or a certain grass type, or even getting under a sprinkler to get wet. All of these activities are fine provided no chemicals have been sprayed around the lawn or garden, and no predators are nearby (yes, your little dog is a predator).

Breeding

Many people find enjoyment in seeing their own animals reproduce. If you are wanting to breed your Children’s Python, there are a few things you need to consider. At DoLittle Farm, we enjoy helping people to breed their pythons, and so we encourage you to contact us should you be considering this side of things.

So when you get your snake home...

- Make sure your cage is set up, thermostat connected and heating is working.
- Make sure water is in place.
- Place your snake in its home, secure the cage, and leave him alone – preferably in the dark.
- Do not handle your snake.
- Fill in any paperwork you might have (eg wildlife licensing)
- Attempt to feed him 3-4 days after arriving.
- If he feeds, allow him a day to digest, then begin handling. You can also begin to “brighten” up his cage. If he doesn’t feed for you, give him another few days and try feeding again.
- Have FUN!!!

Once a year we recommend you have your animal checked by a qualified reptile vet. A list of reptile vets is located on the DoLittle Farm website.

Going Shopping

Here is a shopping list for you to use when gathering supplies in preparation for your snake.

- Appropriate licence for keeping protect animals
- Escape proof cage (baby and adult)
- Heating (heatpad and heatlamp)
- Thermostat and thermometer
- UV lighting (when older)
- Water spray bottle for misting the cage during shed
- A “humid-hide” for shedding
- Clean substrate
- Hidey-holes
- Habitat
- Waterbowl
- Cage Cleaner
- Vitamins and Calcium Supplements
- A variety of food.
- Workbook to record your animal’s feed history and observations.

Good luck, Have Fun, Enjoy.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact us
at

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