



Reticulated Pythons

Malayopython reticulatus

ADVANCED · 10–20+ FT ADULT · 20–30 YR · NOCTURNAL · SOUTHEAST ASIA · LACEY ACT LISTED

The longest snake in the world, and one most keepers should only admire from the other side of the glass. Reticulated pythons are quick, clever and enormously strong, at home in the rainforests, mangroves and wetlands of Southeast Asia. They are also listed as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act: interstate transport and import are illegal, and some states and cities ban or permit-restrict them. Check your state and local law first.

AT A GLANCE

Ambient temp	80–86 °F
Basking spot	88–92 °F
Night temp	75–80 °F
Humidity	60–80%
UVB	Low levels beneficial
Diet	Rats, rabbits (frozen/thawed)
Feeding	Every 14–21 days
Adult size	10–20+ ft (super dwarf 8–12 ft)
Lifespan	20–30 years



The name means net-like, after the pattern. Retics draw a crowd at every NARBC show, and almost nobody in that crowd should own one.

Photo: Steve Wilson - over 9 million views Thanks !! / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Law First, Then the Animal

Start with paperwork, not enclosures. Federal law bars import and interstate transport of this species, so a retic bought two states over cannot legally come home with you. Several states and cities go further with outright bans or permits. Then the animal: retics are bright, food-motivated and strong enough to hurt an adult. **Never handle a mainland retic without a second competent adult in the room.** That rule has no exceptions.

02

Housing, and the Space Problem

Retics grow astonishingly fast, and the numbers below are floor space, not suggestions. A hatchling in a 24×18×12 tub outgrows it in a hurry. A juvenile needs 48×24×18, an adult mainland needs 120×48×36 as a minimum, and a purpose-built room is the honest answer. A rack is a hatchling option at best. Dwarf and Super Dwarf localities (Jampea, Kalatoa, Madu) stay smaller. Never house two together. Giant constrictors injure and eat cagemates, and there is no upside.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	24×18×12	36×18×18	Grows astonishingly fast; plan and budget for adult space now.
Juvenile	48×24×18	72×24×18	Alert, intelligent, potentially defensive; racks no longer suit this size.
Subadult	96×36×24	120×48×30	Dwarf and Super Dwarf localities (Jampea, Kalatoa, Madu) stay smaller.
Adult	120×48×36	Custom room	Mainland can exceed 15–20 ft; dwarfs 6–10 ft. Never handle mainland alone.

Dimensions in inches, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space is the priority at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Give a warm side of 88–92 °F, an ambient 80–86 °F across the rest of the enclosure, and a night range of 75–80 °F. At retic size that means real heating hardware on a thermostat, checked with a temperature gun, not a stick-on dial. Heat rocks have no place here; a snake this heavy will lie on one and cook. Low-level UVB is not required but is beneficial, and a linear tube over a room-sized enclosure is easy to justify.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 60–80%, which matches the rainforest, mangrove and wetland edges these snakes come from. Get there with a large water container, a deep substrate layer and controlled ventilation, not with a misting habit that leaves everything wet. Retics swim and will soak. The container must be big enough for the animal and heavy enough to stay put. Damp plus cool is what breeds respiratory infection, so fix a low reading by raising humidity, never by dropping heat.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

A deep, moisture-holding bedding does most of the humidity work: cypress mulch or coconut husk, several inches deep, spot-cleaned often because a retic's waste output is on another scale. Skip loose sand, especially for young animals. Give two hides an adult can actually fit inside, sturdy shelves or branches for juveniles that still climb, and a lock on every door. This is a curious, intelligent snake that tests its enclosure, and it only has to find one weak latch.

06

Feeding, and the Feeding Response

Rats early, rabbits later, all frozen and thawed. A retic eats every 14–21 days, and that gap is the point: this is a species keepers routinely overfeed into a short, fat life. Feed with tongs long enough to keep your hands out of the strike zone, and hook-train the snake so an opening door never becomes the dinner bell. Weigh the snake and watch its shape. A retic should be muscular, not round.

07

Health Red Flags

Respiratory infection is the one that kills big pythons: open-mouth breathing, popping or bubbling at the nostrils, a snake that won't settle flat. Check the belly scales, since a heavy animal on damp bedding gets scale rot fast, and look for stuck shed on eye caps and the tail tip. Sudden weight loss, months of refused food, or a regurgitated meal mean a reptile vet who knows giant snakes. Book early: a sick retic is a two-person job.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.