



Spotted Pythons

Antaresia maculosa

BEGINNER · 2.5–4 FT ADULT · 20–30 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · AUSTRALIA

A small Australian python, and one of the easiest snakes in the hobby to get right. Spotted pythons top out around four feet, tolerate handling well, and live twenty years or more on straightforward care. They hunt at night across scrub, woodland and tropical forest, they feed with real enthusiasm, and the honest catch is that a hatchling's enthusiasm sometimes arrives before it can tell your hand from dinner.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Ambient temp	78–85 °F day, 70–75 °F night
Basking spot	88–92 °F
Humidity	40–60%
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet	Carnivore: mice
Feeding	Every 7–10 days
Adult size	2.5–4 feet
Lifespan	20–30 years



Captive-bred spotted pythons fill breeder tables at every NARBC show; the species takes its name from the dark blotching it wears.

Photo: dhfischer / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Temperament & Handling

Spotted pythons are among the hardiest snakes you can start with: a shade bigger than a Children's python, and forgiving of the mistakes every new keeper makes. Hatchlings are a different animal from adults. They're food-motivated, quick, and will nip a warm hand that arrives without warning. That fades with age and calm, regular handling. Keep one snake per enclosure. Two of them will hit the same mouse, and a python that gets hold of its cagemate cannot back its teeth out.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Floor space beats height. A hatchling starts in a 16×8×8 and works up; an adult needs 36×18×18 at minimum, with 48×24×18 the size that actually looks like a home. Racks suit them through subadult and are only conditional for adults, who do better in a front-opening enclosure. Whatever you use, the lid locks. A snake this size finds a gap you swore wasn't there. Give two hides, one warm and one cool, and a branch: they climb more than the footprint suggests.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	16×8×8	20×12×12	A shade larger than a Children's python; rack systems suit this stage.
Juvenile	20×12×12	24×18×12	Hardy and forgiving of a new keeper's learning curve; racks work here.
Subadult	24×18×12	36×18×18	Adapts well to regular handling. Floor space first, rack still fine.
Adult	36×18×18	48×24×18	Care matches a Children's python; racks conditional, front-opening better.

Enclosure sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; a horizontal footprint at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Build a gradient along the long axis: 78–85 °F ambient, a basking spot of 88–92 °F, and a night drop to 70–75 °F. Low UVB is beneficial rather than required, and a low-output bulb over part of the enclosure is a cheap upgrade to a nocturnal snake's day. **Every heat source runs through a thermostat, verified with your own thermometer.** Heat rocks have no place here; they cook belly scales before the snake reacts.

04

Humidity & Water

Aim for 40–60%, which in most homes is ordinary room air plus a water bowl. The width of that range is the point: this python comes from scrub, woodland and tropical forest, so it tolerates a spread, but constant wet is what kills. Use a bowl heavy enough not to tip and big enough to soak in, and keep it clean. If a shed comes off in pieces, add a humid hide with damp moss rather than misting the whole enclosure.

05

Substrate & Furnishing

Aspen, cypress mulch or coconut husk all work; pick the one that holds your humidity without going sour. Skip loose sand at every age, because a mouthful taken with a meal is an impaction risk no snake needs. Spot clean weekly, strip it monthly. Then clutter the place: cork bark, a branch, leaf litter, a hide at each end of the gradient. A snake with cover explores instead of sitting in one corner all day.

06

Feeding

Mice, start to finish. Hatchlings take pinkies and adults take an adult mouse, on a cadence of every 7–10 days for life. Keep prey no wider than the thickest part of the snake. Frozen/thawed is safer for the animal and simpler for you: thaw it fully, warm it, offer it with tongs after dark. The risk with this species isn't a hunger strike, it's a keeper who enjoys the feeding response too much. Small pythons get fat quietly.

07

Health Red Flags

Respiratory infection is the one to memorize, and it almost always follows a setup that ran cold or damp: repeated yawning, open-mouth breathing, wheezing, or bubbling at the nostrils. That combination is a reptile-vet visit, not a wait-and-see. Watch too for shed coming off in patches or caps left on the eyes, black specks moving over the scales after a soak, and any regurgitated meal. Weigh monthly; a scale sees trouble first.

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.