

# CREATURE CARE SHEET

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## Children's Python

### *Antaresia childreni*

Children's pythons come from the North of Australia. The name is not derived from any relationship to children, but in honor of John George Children, who was a curator of the zoological collection at the British Museum in the 19th Century. They are also called the faded python as their spotted pattern fades as they mature. They inhabit many different types of habitat, and because of this adaptability they do well in captivity. In the wild, children's pythons feed on lizards and frogs when young, and may include some mammalian prey as adults. Captive bred children's pythons are usually fed exclusively on frozen/thawed mice.

### Housing / Heating / Lighting

Children's pythons can be housed in pairs or trios, however they should always be separated when feeding in order to ensure there are no mishaps. They do like to climb and will make use of any available branches or other 'furniture' inside the cage. Ours enjoy having a varied environment to explore, including using toilet paper tubes to thread through.

Keeping childreni in a glass type aquarium will require a minimum 90 litre tank-m longer than tall for a single snake or 150 litre for a pair. Our adult pair can be kept in an enclosure measuring 45cm deep x 1.3mlong x 30cm in height. Since glass is not an insulator we recommend using either rigid insulation board or similar insulation along at least the back if not the sides to allow for better temperature retention. On top you can lay a piece of either to keep the heat from escaping as long as you allow a bit of breathing space for air to get in and out.

Aspen shavings are an inexpensive and readily available bedding which allows for easy spot cleaning, unlike 'reptile carpet'. The shavings should be completely cleaned out and replaced at least every other month.

They will need a water bowl with clean water available to them at all times. Pythons love fresh water! Having a water bowl also lends humidity to their environment which helps them to shed.

The enclosure should have a cool side and a hot side--the goal is to create a "temperature gradient". This will allow the snake to pick the temperature zone it wants to be in (thermoregulation). In the day time, the hot end of the enclosure should be set at 31-32 C, and the cool end at about 26-27C. At night, temperatures can drop by about 2-3 degrees. (Lowering the temperature at night will help mimic the natural day/night cycle, but it is not a requirement.) There are many different heating options available such as placing an under tank heat mat / a back or top heat panel on one side and leaving the other side to be the cool end. With any heating device you will want to acquire a thermostat to ensure that your enclosure's hot end does not get too hot. A less-expensive (and somewhat less reliable) option is to use a thermometer and rheostat (dimmer) to control the temperature. Whatever you decide to use, it is very important to precisely monitor and control the temperature at all times. Adding heavy, heat-absorbing objects like rocks in the enclosure can also help raise the ambient temperature.

**Cheshire Waterlife & Falconry Centre**  
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NEVER use electric "heat rocks" for your snake's enclosure - they can cause severe burns. Great care should also be taken if you choose to use a heat lamp. Lamps can easily get too warm, even at very low wattage, and the additional lighting is unnecessary for their health/happiness. If there is natural daylight coming into the room, that will be more than enough to give your snake the appropriate day/night cycle. They do not require UV as many lizards do.

The enclosure should have at least two hides to allow the snake to choose more than one location. One should be on the hot side and the other on the cool side. Hides can be anything from inverted plastic flower pots, plastic bowls with a hole cut into them, or a plastic container.

## Feeding

Juvenile pythons are fed on pinkies (baby hairless mice) but as they mature can be fed on larger adult mice. The frequency of feeding is dependant on the size of the meal they are served, but it is common for a snake to only eat 1-2 mice a week. A snake can handle a meal much larger than you might think, but its meal should only be in girth just over the girth of the snake itself. If you're feeding your snake and you don't see a bump, it's time to go up to the next size prey-item or perhaps feed more often until they are ready to handle another size larger. Another way to determine a good meal for your snake is by weight. A good meal is ten percent of the weight of the snake.

TIP - Get a calendar to keep track of your snake's feedings and sheddings. Since they are not a pet you feed every day, you might find that you forget when and what their last meal was. It's also helpful to keep a record for vet visits.

## Adult Size

The children's python is one of the smallest pythons not only in Australia, but in the world. Only the anthill python is smaller. It reaches about 1 metre, but most only reach a length of 60-75cm. By comparison a ball python (one of the most popular snakes in the pet trade) can reach 150cm in length and is a far heavier bodied snake.

This species of python lives on average around 20 - 30 years depending on the level of care they receive.

## Shedding

When your snake is getting ready to shed (approximately once a month) it's eyes will glaze over to a milky white. Usually it's best to leave your snake alone during this time as it will most likely just want to hide until the process is complete. The shed should come off in one piece if there is adequate humidity in the enclosure. If you encounter shed that is still left on the snake, setting up a humid hide for them will help them get the moisture they need to get rid of the rest of the incomplete shed. If your snake is having a very bad time with shedding, you should consult a veterinarian.