



# Australian Brown Water Python (*Liasis fuscus*)

---

## An Oftentimes Overlooked Aussie

The Australian brown water python, or simply water python, is a medium sized species of terrestrial to semi-aquatic python indigenous to northern Australia, Irian Jaya, and Papua New Guinea, as well as surrounding areas. This species is a moderately to robustly built snake with relatively long heads somewhat distinct from their necks, and coloration can range from a uniformly, unpatterned dark brownish-black, to brown, olive-brown, or yellowish-brown. This species' skin and scales are also highly iridescent, and the ventral, or belly, as well as their laterals, or sides, can range from a dull to vibrant yellow to golden in color. Their lower jaws and throats are a lighter cream in color as well, while the undersides of their tails ranges from a darker brownish to blackish. As with most pythons, Australian brown water pythons are primarily nocturnal to crepuscular, with most of their activity taking place at dawn, dusk, or at night. They are also a primarily terrestrial species, although they can climb as well, and may also be found in and near wetlands or margins of other water bodies. Although still rather uncommonly kept in captivity outside of their native ranges, these highly underrated, and beautiful species of medium sized pythons can make for highly enjoyable species to maintain for the more intermediate to experienced reptile enthusiast, and are sure to not disappoint!

## Taxonomy

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Squamata

**Suborder:** Serpentes

**Infraorder:** Alethinophidia

**Family:** Pythonidae

**Genus:** *Liasis*

**Species:** *Liasis fuscus*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

## Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Australian brown water pythons have the potential to attain longevity of 20 to 25 years or more. Up to 35 to 40 years is also known.

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

## **Distribution and Habitat**

Australian brown water pythons are a unique species of medium sized, terrestrial to semi-aquatic Indo-Australian pythons indigenous to portions of northern Australia, from northern Western Australia, to the Northern Territory, and to central to coastal Queensland. Water pythons also occur from Papua New Guinea, eastern Irian Jaya, and surrounding areas of southern Indonesia. Within this range, water pythons occupy a variety of primarily terrestrial to semi-aquatic environments, including tropical to sub-tropical rainforests and other tropical forests and woodlands, to more open woodlands and savannahs, agricultural and cultivated area, plantations, and residential or suburban areas near areas of human habitation. Water pythons especially favor these habitats when ample, humid ground and low canopy cover is available, and when these habitats are located within close proximity to permanent to semi-permanent wetlands and other bodies of water, including lakes, rivers and streams, riverine or stream basins, irrigated croplands or cultivated areas, marshes, and forested swamplands.

## **Conservation Status**

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

## **Legal and Regulatory Status(\*Subject to Change)**

Pythonidae spp. are CITES Appendix II (Except the subspecies included in Appendix I) as of October 2017. Also consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

## **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

## **Size**

Australian water pythons range from about 15 to 20 inches as hatchlings. Most adult Australian water pythons average between 5 and 8 feet, or 60 to 96 inches.

## **Housing and Enclosure**

Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Hatchling water pythons can be started out in a 15 to 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but will soon require larger accommodations. If glass enclosures are used at any point, be sure that the enclosure retains sufficient humidity. Many of the commercially made plastic or fiberglass enclosures, or otherwise custom-designed enclosures that can retain heat and humidity well are perhaps the best and most practical enclosures to use to house mid to large sized boas and pythons. Depending on the age and size of the animal, a four to six foot by two foot enclosure or larger is required. Water pythons can be maintained on a substrate of cage liner material, cypress mulch, or sphagnum fir mixtures, but always ensure that the substrate does not become too damp or moist. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Water pythons will also require a large sturdy water dish or tub that must be cleaned, sanitized, and changed regularly, especially if dirtied. Providing an adequately sized hidebox, artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, logs, and other cage furnishings can also provide additional hiding and basking opportunities. These pythons will also climb if given the opportunity, but floor space is more important than height.

## **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized UTH (or tank heating pad), ceramic or radiant heat emitter, or incandescent, UVA/UVB, or other heat producing bulb. Ideal temperatures for water pythons range from 75 to 82 degrees F on the cool side and 86 to 92 degrees F on the warm side. Most species of snakes have fairly simple and

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Carnivorous***; In the wild, Australian water pythons are carnivorous, and will prey upon a wide range of small mammals, birds, amphibians, and other reptiles that they can ambush, locate, and consume. In captivity, water pythons can be given feeder rodents of appropriate size, such as rats or mice. In most general circumstances, it is recommended to provide humanely pre-killed prey animals acquired from a reputable source, as offering live animals to any snake can carry risk of serious injury or even death to your snake when the prey item bites to defend itself or otherwise gnaws on your animal. A general rule of thumb when selecting feeder prey item sizes for your snake is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the snake's widest point. It should also be noted that many snakes may refuse food for longer periods of time over several weeks or months, especially in the fall and winter months or if several other husbandry conditions are not being met. While these things can be alarming, it is oftentimes normal, but their overall health and weight should be monitored during these times to make sure they do not lose weight or otherwise deteriorate. Most snakes typically are fed whole prey items, and do not usually require additional calcium or vitamin D3 supplementation unless otherwise directed. Their feeding frequency will also depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

As with many snakes, hatchling and juvenile water pythons are often initially more nervous and nippy. It is important to always handle them gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. While many species of pythons in the genus *Liasis* are known for biting and being somewhat defensive, the temperaments of these Australian brown water pythons can vary from individual to individual. Some individuals can become quite docile and uninclined to bite, while others can be much more prone to doing so at even the slightest disturbances. In general, however, Australian brown water pythons are a species of python more suitable for the intermediate to experienced reptile enthusiast due to their potential adult size, disposition, and strong feeding response. These pythons often make fine additions to most any reptile collection given these conditions are met.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

*Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as*  
<http://www.madisonherps.org>

*substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers. Last Updated: 22 December 2018.*

\*Copyright Madison Area Herpetological Society, 2018