



\*Biodiversity Indonesia



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## Macklot's and Savu Pythons (*Liasis mackloti* spp.)

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### Unique Indonesians

Also known as the freckled pythons or Indonesian water pythons, the Macklot's and Savu pythons are medium sized, terrestrial pythons with unique coloration and appearances. There are two subspecies known, the Macklot's Python (*Liasis mackloti mackloti*) and the Savu Python (*Liasis mackloti savuensis*). These are a medium sized, medium bodied species of python with a light to dark brown, olive brown, grayish, olive gray, reddish, to reddish orange (in the Savu subspecies) ground color. They earn their other common name of Freckled python from their paler or lighter cream to yellowish freckling. The undersides of their chins, neck, and throat are pale yellow or cream colored grading into a darker ventral surface posteriorly, and the irises are usually silver in this species. As with many python species, Savu and Macklot's pythons are ambush predators of small to large mammals, birds, and reptiles, where they seek refuge in burrows, caves, or rocky crevices.

### 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 mackloti*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Savu and Macklot's pythons can attain longevity of 20 to 25 years or more. Up to 35 to 40 years is also not uncommon.

### Distribution and Habitat

The Macklot's and Savu pythons, and their subspecies are a unique genus and species of medium sized, terrestrial to semi-arboreal pythons indigenous to northern Australia, northward into Indonesia and the Lesser Sunda Islands. While the more precise ranges for these snakes is largely dependent upon the subspecies, these medium sized pythons generally occur from the northern coast of Australia in Queensland and the Northern Territory, through to the Indonesian Islands, including Savu, Timor, and East Nusa Tenggara. Within this range, Macklots and Savu pythons occupy primarily terrestrial to semi-arboreal environments, including the tropical to sub-tropical, open to semi-open, rocky grasslands to savannahs, agricultural and cultivated areas, and open, semi-dry tropical forests and woodlands, where these species favor and seek refuge in rocky crevices and outcroppings, hollowed logs or burrows, and tree cavities or other areas of dense foliage or vegetation. These species of pythons especially favor these habitats when they are located near permanent to semi-permanent water sources such as irrigated croplands, lakes, rivers, streams, and reservoirs.

### **Origin/History**

*Liasis mackloti* A.M.C. Duméril & Bibron, 1844. Specific subspecies would have other authors first describing them during other years.

Macklot's and Savu pythons were first imported into the U.S. and the U.K. during the mid to late 1990's, where they would used to be a popular and common species in herpetoculture and the pet trade. However, by the mid 2000's, Macklot's and Savus would seem to have all but disappeared, possibly at least in part due to the increased popularity of ball pythons and other species in the industry.

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Macklot's and Savu pythons range from 15 to 20 inches as hatchlings. Adult Savu and Macklot's pythons average between 5 and 7 feet, or about 60 to 84 inches, with a maximum recorded size of around 9 feet, or 108 inches.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Arboreal.*** Housing must be sealed, well ventilated, and escape proof. Hatchling Macklot's and Savu pythons can be started out in a 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. These 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. Macklot's and Savu 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. Macklot's and Savu pythons will 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 Macklot's and Savu 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 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. Macklot's and Savu pythons should be maintained at relatively moderate to high relative humidity levels, which may range from about 50 to 70%, which may vary depending on the species and subspecies, and with additional humid hides or retreats to assist with shedding and overall health.

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

***Carnivorous;*** In the wild, Macklot's and Savu 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, these 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 Macklot's and Savu 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. These pythons have a negative reputation for being defensive and prone to biting. However, if they are handled and worked with regularly, the Savus and Macklot's can settle down considerably and can make for very active and attractive species to maintain. The Macklot's and Savus are not the most suitable python for beginners due to their potential adult size, disposition, and strong feeding response, but for the adequately experienced and prepared intermediate to advanced reptile keeper, these pythons often make fine additions to most any reptile collection.

**\*\*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:

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