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MONITOR LIZARDS

Black Tree Monitor

Varanus beccarii

A small, black, arboreal monitor from the Aru Islands off New Guinea with a prehensile tail and unusually long forelimbs, which it uses like hands when hunting. The animal is nervous, needs a tall, warm enclosure with high humidity and is difficult to breed, so it is only suitable for an experienced keeper.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus prasinus beccarii; Monitor beccarii*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**80-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**220-300 g**
Lifespan	**11-17 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**150 × 100 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**26-30 °C**
Basking spot	**35-40 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-24 °C**
Humidity	**55-70%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3 eggs**
Incubation	**157-203 days** at 29-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Data Deficient (DD)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult needs a tall enclosure of at least 150 × 100 × 150 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better. A pair needs more space, so the female can get away from the male.

TEMPERATURE

The daytime temperature in the enclosure should be about 26-30 °C, but may range from 24 to 35 °C across the enclosure. Under a heat lamp there must be a basking spot of 35-40 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be 55-70 %, with fluctuations over the day. Spray the floor daily with fresh water so the humidity rises, and let it dry out a little again during the day. The young are kept at over 60 % with daily spraying.

LIGHTING AND UVB

Varanus beccarii is diurnal and should have UVB light. Use a combined heat and UVB lamp of 100-160 W over the basking spot, preferably supplemented with filtered daylight.

FEEDING

The species lives mostly on live insects. Adults are fed cockroaches (e.g. *Blaptica dubia*) supplemented with mealworms, superworms (*Zophobas morio*), crickets and larvae of rose chafers (*Pachnoda*).

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Varanus beccarii is nervous and easily stressed by handling. Bites and claws are a real risk: the teeth are long, the claws sharp, and a frightened animal can also kick and defecate on the person holding it.

NATIVE RANGE

Indonesia.