herpy

MONITOR LIZARDS

Mitchell's water monitor

Varanus mitchelli

Varanus mitchelli is a slender, semi-aquatic monitor from northern Australia, typically 60-70 cm and at most about 1 m long with a laterally compressed swimming tail. The species is shy, almost unknown in the hobby and assessed as critically endangered, because the poison of the introduced toad *Rhinella marina* has decimated populations. There is little care experience, and it belongs with the very experienced.

Family: Varanidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**60-96 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Savanna and wetland**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**200 × 100 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**28-32 °C**
Basking spot	**40-50 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-25 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Water section** depth 20-30 cm
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**7-27 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-6**
Incubation	**90-289 days** at 26-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	There is almost no experience of keeping *Varanus mitchelli*, so the care is based on the related *V. acanthurus*, on a single breeding of the species and on its life in the wild.
TEMPERATURE	By day the enclosure must be 28-32 °C, and the basking spot must reach 40-50 °C measured as surface temperature with an IR thermometer. At night the heat is switched off and the temperature falls to 22-25 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity must be 50-80 %: slightly higher at night and by the water, drier at the basking spot. The water section and a damp substrate keep humidity up.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The species is semi-aquatic, so a fixed water section is part of the enclosure and not merely a drinking bowl.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks and needs UVB corresponding to Ferguson zone 3. Mount a T5 tube (10-12 %) or a powerful combination lamp over the basking spot, so that the animal can get close and move out into shade.
FEEDING	In the wild the species eats mainly grasshoppers, spiders and fish, but also other invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and their eggs, small mammals and birds. Insects are therefore a good basis, supplemented with small fish.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus mitchelli* is a shy and cautious species that hides a lot and is not an animal you pick up every day.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.