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MONITOR LIZARDS

Large-scaled water monitor

Varanus nuchalis

Varanus nuchalis is a large, powerfully built water monitor from the central Visayan islands of the Philippines, formerly regarded as a subspecies of *Varanus salvator*. It is recognised by its greatly enlarged nuchal scales and is either marked with pale spots or almost black. Almost nothing is known about the care of this particular species, so much of the advice is borrowed from related water monitors.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus salvator nuchalis; Hydrosaurus nuchalis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**100-150 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal, terrestrial and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 150 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**27-32 °C**
Basking spot	**52-60 °C**
Temperature, night	**21-24 °C**
Humidity	**60-70%**
Water	**Water section** depth 35-50 cm
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**5-10 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-3**
Incubation	**187-220 days** at 27-31.5 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Little is known about the care of *Varanus nuchalis*. The figures are borrowed from close relatives in the same group, especially *Varanus cumingi* and *Varanus salvator*.

TEMPERATURE

Varanus nuchalis needs a background temperature of 27-32 °C by day. The basking spot should have a surface temperature of 52-60 °C, measured with an IR thermometer on the basking spot itself, not in the air.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be 60-70 %. A large water basin keeps humidity up on its own, and a damp, deep substrate gives the animal somewhere to retreat to.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

The species is tied to water, so a large water section is not optional. It must be big enough for the whole animal to lie submerged and swim, and the depth should be 35-50 cm for an adult.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and basks, so strong light and UVB are essential. It belongs to Ferguson zone 3, like other diurnal monitors that bask a great deal.

FEEDING

The diet of *Varanus nuchalis* in the wild has not been studied. Related water monitors eat many kinds of animals and carrion, and the diet below is borrowed from them.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Varanus nuchalis must be handled like other large water monitors. Even a medium-sized monitor has sharp teeth, strong claws and a powerful tail that it can lash with. A bite can cause deep wounds, and the claws can tear the skin.

NATIVE RANGE

Philippines.