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MONITOR LIZARDS

Spotted Tree Monitor

Varanus similis

Varanus similis is a small, diurnal tree monitor from northern Australia and New Guinea. It is kept in a tall enclosure with cork, hides and a warm basking spot, lives on feeder insects and is a rare, tree-dwelling alternative to the ground-dwelling small monitors. Experience with its care is limited, though.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus timorensis similis; Varanus scalaris similis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**45-60 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Savanna and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**80 × 80 × 130 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-30 °C**
Basking spot	**40-42 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-25 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24 months**
Clutch size	**3-18 eggs**
Incubation	**120-136 days** at 28-29 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult needs a tall terrarium of at least 80 × 80 × 130 cm (length × width × height). A pair needs more space, preferably 100 × 100 × 200 cm. As the species is arboreal, height counts for more than floor area.

TEMPERATURE

The daytime temperature in the terrarium is 25-30 °C, with 30 °C in the upper parts and 25 °C down at the bottom. The basking spot is a branch or stone under a spotlight that gives a local surface temperature of 40-42 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Relative humidity is kept at 60-80 %. This is achieved by misting the enclosure with water in the evening and letting the substrate hold moisture, possibly with a weak heating cable under the floor.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and needs bright light and UVB. Over the basking spot a 150 W HQI floodlight of daylight quality (5000 K) can be combined with a 150 W halogen spotlight.

FEEDING

The animals take all common feeder insects and are not fussy. Cockroaches (*Blaptica dubia* and *Blaberus atropus*) of a suitable size make a good staple, and locusts are a popular change.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Wild-caught animals are shy at first, but that is natural behaviour: the species flees or hides until the threat has passed, and hunts from ambush. It does not mean the species is especially timid.

NATIVE RANGE

Australia and Papua New Guinea.