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MONITOR LIZARDS

Solomon Island spiny monitor

Varanus spinulosus

Varanus spinulosus is a rare and almost unknown monitor from the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, recognisable by its sandpaper-like, spiny scale texture and rows of large yellow spots on a dark ground. Its care is based on related species, because there is almost no experience with it in captivity.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus indicus spinulosus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-100 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 120 × 200 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**27-30 °C**
Basking spot	**40-48 °C**
Temperature, night	**24-25 °C**
Humidity	**60-90%**
Water	**Water section** depth 10-40 cm
Water temperature	**26-29 °C**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**4-7 eggs**
Incubation	**150-195 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
The dimensions are borrowed from related monitors about 100-140 cm long. An adult *Varanus spinulosus* needs a home-built enclosure or a whole room of at least 300 × 120 × 200 cm (length × width × height).

TEMPERATURE
The temperatures for *Varanus spinulosus* are borrowed from *V. juxtindicus* and other species in the *V. indicus* group. The air temperature is kept at 27-30 °C by day and 24-25 °C at night, and the water at 26-29 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
The humidity must be 60-80 % by day and higher at night, up to 90 %. This is achieved with a large water area, moist substrate and daily spraying. Still air causes mould and bacterial growth, so ventilation must be good.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
Its relatives in the *V. indicus* group swim and dive frequently and sleep in the water, so a permanent water section is recommended, even though the species is not known to be semi-aquatic.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is diurnal and basks in full sun in the middle of the day, so as an adult it needs strong light and UVB.

FEEDING
In the wild the species eats arthropods, megapode eggs, fish and small birds. It comes out of the forest to take the entrails of cleaned fish, raids henhouses and forages in the tidal zone.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
The species is shy in the wild and flees up into palm crowns. A captured animal may hiss and still calm down quickly without trying to bite, but nothing more is known about its temperament.

NATIVE RANGE
Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.