herpy

MONITOR LIZARDS

Pygmy Mulga Monitor

Varanus gilleni

A small, slender and diurnal tree climber from the interior desert regions of Australia. *Varanus gilleni* grows to only 35-40 cm and is one of the least demanding monitors, but it needs a very hot basking spot, a tall enclosure and a fixed rhythm with a cool winter.

Family: Varanidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**35-40 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**60-80 g**
Lifespan	**8-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 60 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**26-30 °C**
Basking spot	**40-60 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**18-22 °C** 6-10 weeks
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or one male with several females**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-7 eggs**
Incubation	**84-131 days** at 26-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	For an adult pair the enclosure should be at least 60 × 60 × 90 cm (length × width × height), and bigger is better. The figures given for a pair range from 50 × 50 × 90 cm to 60 × 60 × 90 cm.
TEMPERATURE	*Varanus gilleni* needs a very hot basking spot. The surface temperature of the branch under the heat source is measured with an IR thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from dry regions and should not have high humidity.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks at high heat. The figures on UVB vary: several generations have been bred healthy without UV light, but a 10 % UVB tube is also recommended.
FEEDING	*Varanus gilleni* eats mostly small arthropods: crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches, mealworms, spiders and other insects. In the wild it also takes small lizards, especially geckos, and sometimes birds' eggs.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus gilleni* is among the calmest monitors. It is far less fast and quick-tempered than, for example, *V. acanthurus* and *V. tristis*. It seldom bites, and even animals that are a little skittish at first soon settle down.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.

The full guide with map and updates: herpy.org/varaner/varanus-gilleni