herpy

MONITOR LIZARDS

Sand Monitor

Varanus gouldii

Varanus gouldii is a large, diurnal ground-dwelling monitor from most of Australia and southern Papua New Guinea. It digs, runs fast and eats almost anything it can overpower. The species is hardy in captivity, but it grows to nearly 160 cm, so it needs a home-built enclosure or a whole room, powerful heat and a keeper with experience of large monitors.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus gouldii flavirufus; Varanus flavirufus* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**100-160 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**2,000-6,000 g**
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert, semi-desert and savanna**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 150 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-35 °C**
Basking spot	**50-58 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**30-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**5-17 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**180-190 days** at 28-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	An adult needs far more than an ordinary trade enclosure: a home-built enclosure or a room of at least 300 × 150 × 150 cm (length × width × height) for one animal.
TEMPERATURE	*Varanus gouldii* loves the sun and needs a large temperature gradient. The figures are based on few animals.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from dry and hot regions, and the right humidity is not documented. Keep it moderate, about 30-60 %, and provide good ventilation.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	Place a large, heavy and low water container at the cool end, so that the animal cannot tip it over, and change the water daily. The animal drinks from it, and large animals may lie in it to cool down.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Varanus gouldii* is diurnal and lives in full sun. The need for UVB has not been clarified, and the animal can be kept without UVB light if it gets half an hour of sunlight when the enclosure is cleaned, and whole prey as food.
FEEDING	*Varanus gouldii* eats anything it can overpower, and the food should be varied and consist of whole prey.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	Safety: *Varanus gouldii* is large, fast and alert. If it feels threatened, it can rise up, puff itself up, hiss and lash its tail.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia and Papua New Guinea.

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