herpy

MONITOR LIZARDS

Mitchell's water monitor

Varanus mitchelli

Varanus mitchelli is a slender, semi-aquatic monitor from northern Australia, typically 60-70 cm and at most about 1 m long with a laterally compressed swimming tail. The species is shy, almost unknown in the hobby and assessed as critically endangered, because the poison of the introduced toad *Rhinella marina* has decimated populations. There is little care experience, and it belongs with the very experienced.

Family: Varanidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**60-96 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Savanna and wetland**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**200 × 100 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**28-32 °C**
Basking spot	**40-50 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-25 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Water section** depth 20-30 cm
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**7-27 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-6**
Incubation	**90-289 days** at 26-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	There is almost no documented experience with keeping *Varanus mitchelli*, and the following is therefore cautiously borrowed from a related species, the dry-country *V. acanthurus*, and from the one documented breeding of the species.
TEMPERATURE	The temperature conditions are not documented for the species, and the figures given here are an estimate based on the tropical northern Australian climate and relatives in the same subgenus.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity is not documented, but the species belongs by water and in the tropical north, so a moderate to high humidity of about 50-80 % is a reasonable estimate.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	The species is semi-aquatic, so a permanent water section is part of the terrarium and not merely a drinking bowl.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks, so UVB is strongly recommended, but no figures are documented for it specifically.
FEEDING	In the wild the species eats mainly grasshoppers, spiders and fish, but also other invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and their eggs, small mammals and birds. Insects are therefore a good foundation, supplemented with small fish.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus mitchelli* is a shy and cautious species that hides a lot and is not an animal you pick up every day.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.