



Water Monitor Lizard

(*Varanus salvator* Laurenti)

The Water Monitor Lizard (*Varanus salvator*) is one of the largest lizards in the world, and a voracious carnivore. It is also popular because of its delectableness to exotic food lovers.

This species is highly mobile and an excellent swimmer. It has been observed to swim far out at sea and can remain underwater for over half an hour. With its powerful legs, it can run fast and climb swiftly up the trees, chasing after its prey or running away from an enemy. The young species usually rest on trees for its safety. Adult species however, hide in burrows built along riverbanks. The entrance starts on a downward slope, and then increases, forming a shallow pool of water. The average burrow is about 9.5 m long and 2 m deep. In the burrow, the average temperature is around 26° Celsius.

Water Monitors are rarely found far from water, both fresh and saltwater. They are particularly common in mangroves and riverbanks. They are also found in grasslands, forests, swamps, beaches and even cultivated land. These lizards have also been observed on elevations as high as 1,100 m above sea level, and are among the first large vertebrates to colonise new islands



Juveniles are more brightly coloured with bright yellow markings on the body and yellow bands on the tail, contrasting against a darker body. But they are more secretive and less seen. Males grow faster – longer and heavier - than females. In ideal conditions, they mature in 2 years, at 1-1.3 m for males and 0.5-1.2 m for females. Water Monitors can live up to 15 years.

The Water Monitor Lizard is well distributed in the ASEAN region.

Status: Endangered

– The Research Branch, ARCBC

