
HUSBANDRY NOTES

VARANUS PANOPTES HORNI (Argus Monitor) REPRODUCTION

An adult pair of *Varanus panoptes horni* (male acquired as a hatchling in August 2006 and female acquired in 2007 as a 3 year old adult) has been maintained in a 366 x 122 x 244 cm custom enclosure since 5 April 2007. The enclosure offers multiple basking areas and a substrate depth of 60 cm comprised of a topsoil and sand mixture. Prior to being introduced to the male, the female laid two clutches of infertile eggs. For most of the year, a partition across the center of the enclosure was used to separate the pair to prevent fighting. The divider was removed every two weeks for three to four day intervals. The adults were offered a daily diet consisting primarily of mice, although bait fish (“bull minnows”) ca. 12–15 cm long were occasionally offered.

Prior to copulation, the male became very restless and repeatedly attempted to access the female through the partition. During this time, the female was offered as many mice as she would eat, usually 6-8 small adult mice per day.

Copulation was first observed on 3 June 2007, and continued intermittently each day for four days. At the time of copulation, the male measured ca. 107 cm in total length and the female was approximately 10 cm longer, and also heavier and larger in build. Several days after copulation ended, the female’s abdomen appeared noticeably distended, and she spent time resting in irregular positions, presumably to relieve abdominal pressure while gravid. The pair was separated one week prior to the estimated time of nesting, ca. 10 days after the last observed copulation.

Nesting occurred at night on 26 June 2007. A total of 12 eggs were deposited in the substrate of the enclosure at a depth of ca. 41-46 cm and at a temperature of 28.9 °C. The eggs were retrieved and set up for incubation inside a sealed 5.7 L plastic container, partially buried in a 1:1 mixture of water and perlite by weight. The egg box was placed on a shelf in the same room as the adults’ enclosure, where ambient temperatures averaged around 29-30 °C during the day, with temperatures dropping ca. 3-4 °C at night, with the lowest recorded temperature being 18.3 °C. The egg box was vented weekly.

Nine eggs hatched between 6 and 22 January 2008. Three eggs failed to hatch and contained dead full-term embryos. All three full-term embryos still had a considerable amount of yolk left, and the cause of their deaths remains unknown. Live hatchling measurements are presented in Table 1. No difficulties were experienced with the rearing of the hatchlings, and all offspring continue to grow rapidly.

Table 1. Hatchling measurements.

Hatching No.	Mass (g)	SVL (cm)	Tail Length (cm)	Total Length (cm)
1	36	12.0	14.0	26.0
2	43	12.5	15.5	28.0
3	35	11.0	16.0	27.0
4	38	11.5	14.0	25.5
5	41	11.5	14.5	26.0
6	35	12.0	14.5	26.5
7	43	12.5	16.5	29.0
8	32	12.0	14.0	26.0
9	40	12.0	15.0	27.0



Figure 1. Hatchling *V. panoptes horni* emerging from egg.



Figure 2. Recently-emerged hatchling



Figure 3. Resulting offspring

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NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

VARANUS BENGALENSIS (Bengal Monitor) NESTING

While driving through King's Sanctuary in Nagarhole National Park, India late one morning on 8 December 2006, a Bengal monitor, *Varanus bengalensis* (estimated to be ca. 70-80 cm in total length) was sighted on the side of the lightly-traveled road. It was first presumed that the lizard was dead given its lack of movement. Upon closer inspection, the lizard was positioned with its hind legs down inside a burrow located ca. 15-30 cm from the edge of the road. When poked with a stick by a park ranger to see if it was alive, the monitor failed to flinch or move and remained extremely rigid. By gently moving it aside slightly with a stick, several eggs were revealed within the burrow, although the total number of eggs could not be determined.

The surrounding area consisted of scrubby undergrowth interspersed with large trees, partially cleared for about 20 m from the road. No rainfall was encountered that day however the ground appeared as though it had rained relatively recently. December falls within the wet season of the region, and vegetation in the area was lush and green. Only one other *V. bengalensis* was observed in Nagarhole National Park, emerging and fleeing from a burrow.

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Figure 1. *Varanus bengalensis* nesting. Photograph by Meriel Weston

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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