

## The Mangrove Monitor

**Check out the mangrove monitor lizard.**

*By Mark O'Shea*

Distribution: Eastern Indonesia, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Micronesia and northern Australia.

Habitat: Mangrove swamps, coastal forest, coconut plantations.

Diet: Small mammals, birds and their eggs, turtles, young crocodiles, lizards, snakes and their eggs, snails and crabs, possibly also fish.

Max. length: 340-580mm SVL (1000-1250mm TL).

Reproductive strategy: Oviparous with clutches of 4-6 eggs.

The mangrove monitor lizard is a wide spread species which can occupy many different habitats, feeding on a diverse array of prey animals and adapting well to live alongside man scavenging from his gardens and chicken-runs. A highly agile climber and an adept swimmer, it is ideally suited to colonise islands within its range. Major threats to the survival of mangrove monitors include hunting for its skin or meat and poisoning by introduced cane toad (*Bufo marinus*). Mangrove monitor skins are frequently used on ceremonial kundu drums.

Sources for more information:

Bennett D., 1998, Monitor Lizards: Natural history, biology and husbandry. Edition Chimaira. 352pp.

De Lisle H.F., 1996, The Natural History of Monitor Lizards. Krieger xiii+201pp.

King D. & B. Green, 1993, Monitors: The biology of varanid lizards. Krieger vi+116.

Steel R., 1996, Living Dragons: A natural history of the World's monitor lizards. Blandford/Ralph Curtis Books. 160pp.

Wikramanayake E.D. & G.L. Dryden, 1988, The reproductive ecology of *Varanus indicus* on Guam. *Herpetologica* 44(3):338-344.