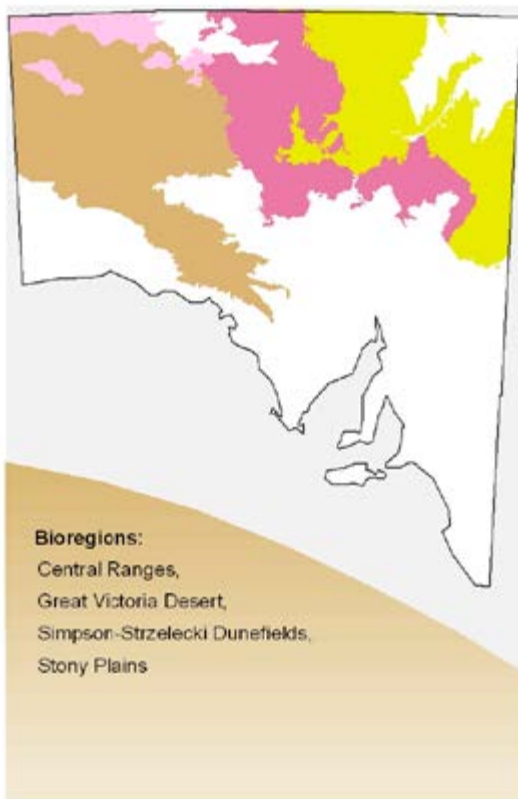


# Perentie

*Varanus giganteus*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

The Perentie is the largest lizard in Australia, growing up to 2.5 metres long. They belong to the monitor family, commonly referred to as goannas. Their appearance is distinctive, with a forked tongue, a long neck and powerful limbs each with five clawed toes on the end. They also have a strong tail and numerous sharp curved, backward pointing teeth. Perenties hibernate from May to August.

They are able to sprint either on all fours or on their hind legs. To get a better view of their surroundings they can stand on their hind legs and balance on their tails. When standing normally or walking, Perenties hold themselves off the ground on their stout legs. This keeps them cooler, away from the heat of the ground. Perenties sometimes lunge forward with an open mouth, either as a bluff or an attack.

Researchers have recently discovered that their bite is slightly venomous. When threatened they rise up, inflate their throat and hiss. If the predator persists they run away, or use their strong tail in defence.

Perenties are a traditional source of food for Aboriginal people living in desert regions.

## Diet

They forage on turtle eggs, insects, birds, other reptiles (including juvenile Perenties) mammals and carrion.

## Breeding

Female Perenties lay 6-12 eggs beneath a large object or mound. Sometimes they bury eggs in termite mounds where the activity of the insects provides constant warmth. Young are brightly coloured and hatch within three to nine months.

## Habitat

Perenties live in arid and semi-arid regions of Australia from Western Queensland to coastal Western Australia. They usually prefer areas around rocky hills and outcrops. To shelter, some Perenties dig burrows with their powerful front legs and claws or take over rabbit burrows. Burrows can be quite large and have several escape exits. Others choose to find shelter in deep rock crevices instead.

## Threats

Perenties are preyed on by humans, wedge-tailed eagles and dingoes. Juveniles are preyed on by snakes and large goannas. Climate change is a threat to the Perenties in their desert habitats, and habitat destruction and degradation means they may have less places to live and less food to eat.



A taste for hunting! Like some snakes Perenties can pick up scents in the air and translate them using the Jacobson's organ located on the roof of the mouth. After catching their prey, they violently shake it until dead and swallow it whole.

### Conservation

You can help the Perentie by:

- finding out more about the Perentie and other desert-dwelling species and giving a presentation to your class about them
- doing your bit to stop climate change by being wise with your energy use at home
- finding out about monitor lizards living on other parts of the world.



Photo by Peter Copley

Perentie

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

