

Lace monitor (*Varanus varius*)



Image: Mark Hutchinson

The lace monitor, also known as the tree goanna is Australia's second largest monitor lizard, the perentie found in arid Australia is the largest. National Parks and Wildlife Service SA receive many calls regarding the unique lace monitor and people's encounters with them while visiting local parks and reserves. The closer than normal human contact may be due to the drought conditions and the lace monitors having to search harder to find food.

This fact sheet provides general information to help you enjoy your stay and appreciate our native wildlife while keeping you and your family safe.

Description

The colours of lace monitors can vary. The most common type seen in the Riverland are dark grey to dull bluish-black with numerous scattered, cream coloured spots or bands.

Lace monitors are agile climbers and can be found in hollow logs, up in tree branches or under logs. They can reach up to 2 m long and can weigh up to 14 kg. Preferring to live alone, they regard trees as places of refuge so will often climb the nearest tree if scared. Usually, lace monitors are reclusive and avoid attention where possible.

You may become aware of them when you hear a group of birds swooping as they try to scare them away from their nests. Lace monitors have long-term home ranges and can move up to 1 km in a day. They are more active in the warmer months and rarely seen in the cooler months.

Distribution

They have a restricted distribution in South Australia, occurring in the upper reaches of the SA Murray-Darling Basin and isolated populations in the southern Flinders Ranges.

In the Riverland, lace monitors are classified as a rare species, so you are fortunate when you see one.

Diet

Lace monitors eat insects, snakes, reptiles, small birds, frogs, eggs, rabbits, small mammals and carrion. They search for food in trees and on the ground. If camping it is a good idea to keep food and rubbish securely stored to avoid them scavenging around camp.

Tips while visiting parks and reserves

Lace monitors are amazing lizards, and it is a great experience to watch them from a distance going about their business. Parks and reserves are their homes and the trees, logs, river, creeks and wetlands which we like to visit provides critical habitat for them to survive.

A few tips to keep you and the lace monitors safe during your visit include:

- please don't feed any native wildlife
- watch from a distance, although they are not naturally aggressive towards people, they have very sharp claws and teeth and may use them if threatened
- leave your pets at home
- store food safely away to avoid them coming into camp in search of scraps and food
- put dead carp away from campsites
- if monitors are being a pest within your campsite, use loud noises to scare them away or move to another site (call the local office to update on-line booking).



References

Hoser, J.1998. Lace Monitors (*Varanus Varius*) in the Wild and in captivity in Australia, with reference to a collection of seven adults held in captivity for eight years. JOURNAL OF THE VICTORIAN HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 10 (1) 1998:22-30, 32, 35-36 Copyright Victorian Herpetological Society.

Australian Reptile Park, website: reptilepark.com.au

More information

Website-www.parks.sa.gov.au

Natural Resources Centre, 2 Wade Street Berri

Phone: 8580 1800