

# YELLOW MONITOR LIZARD

*(Varanus flavescens)*



The **yellow or golden monitor** is a species of monitor lizard found in South Asia. In the local dialects and languages, it is variously called Sun Gohoro (Nepali), Sangohi (Maithili) and Svarna Godhika (Bengali) due to its striking yellow skin! Yellow monitors have a short snout and flattened tail. The average length of the lizard is about 95cm. They are strictly carnivorous and eat frogs, insects and small mammals. Unlike the Bengal monitors, yellow monitors prefer wet areas, can swim and are less adapted to climb trees due to their short hind toes! It is a rare and endangered species found in the flood plains of Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers.

## 'ADEPT ADAPTOR'

According to scientists, yellow monitors can adapt to habitat changes caused due to agriculture!



Like all reptiles, reproduction occurs via internal fertilization. The reproductive activities of yellow monitors are determined by the monsoons. Yellow Monitors have long incubation periods. At a time, a female lays a clutch of 4-30 eggs. According to scientists, juveniles grow rapidly - doubling their length almost twice in less than 2 years!



**DID YOU KNOW?** The Gray Monitor Lizard (*Varanus olivaceus*) is one of the few Varanids that feed on fruit! This type of monitor lizard is endemic to the Philippines.

Monitor lizards are diurnal, i.e., they are active during daytime, with a period of inactivity at night.



### THREATS TO SURVIVAL

The local, national and international trade of its skin is a major threat to the yellow monitors. At times, they are also killed by local populations due to lack of knowledge and misconceptions about them. Habitat alterations due to agriculture are also a threat!

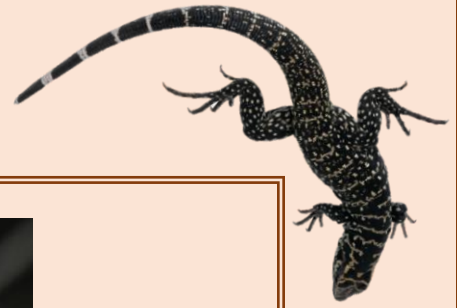
### VENOMOUS OR NOT?

While monitor lizards possess similar dental/venom glands as snakes, scientists are not sure whether they produce venom or not! More research is needed into the feeding habits of monitor lizards to solve this dilemma!

The Varanids are poached for their reproductive organs. These organs resemble the root of a rare central Indian plant, the hatha jodi, which is used in Tantrism to bring good luck.

Yellow Monitors build up large fat reserves to sustain themselves during the winter and wet seasons, when they spend much of their time in water due to inland flooding.





## ACTIVITY CORNER

1. Answer the following!
  - i. To what class, order and species does the Yellow Monitor belong to?  
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  - ii. List out the Varanids that eat fruits.  
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  - iii. Which is the world's largest and smallest monitor lizard?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - iv. What is the reason behind the monitor lizard's name? Are there other types of Monitors that swim like the Yellow Monitor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Document Monitor Lizards in your city/state zoo! - Draw an illustration of the lizards, and note their features. Speak to a zoo official and learn more about their habitats, behavior, mating patterns, etc.
3. Design flashcards on the different types of Monitor Lizards found in India. How can one distinguish between them?

### References -

- Status and Habitat Ecology of the Yellow Monitor, *Varanus Flavescens*, in the Southeastern Part of Kanchanpur District, Nepal - Hemant R. Ghimire, Karan B. Shah
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