



Yellow-spotted Monitor



Sand Goanna



Sand Goannas *Varanus panoptes* and *V. gouldii*

What do they look like? Large, familiar, yellowish to grey goannas to about 1.6 m total length with strong claws. Sometimes very heavy bodied.

Where do they live? Two similar species of “sand goanna” occur in the region, the true Sand Goanna in the south and the Yellow-spotted Monitor in the north. Mostly found in drier country within the region, especially woodlands with sandy soils. Also found in semi-urban areas in more coastal parts of the region. Mostly ground dwelling and burrowing though will sometimes climb trees. Burrows often situated under rock or logs or sometimes in dirt piles left by road graders.

What do they need to live, eat and breed? Strong, bold hunters and scavengers, sand goannas use their excellent sense of smell (tongue-flicking like a snake) and sight to find prey including buried prey like frogs or dragon lizards in their burrows. A wide variety of prey is consumed, mostly animals. Road kill is frequently eaten. Sand goannas use multiple burrows and need variety in ground cover and shelter in order to hunt and hide effectively. They lay soft-shelled eggs in a burrow deep underground.

When might I see (or hear) them? Usually seen crossing roads on warm days.

What management actions affect this species? Maintenance of ground cover, diverse, vigorous native pastures, uncompacted soil and structural diversity ensures sand goannas have a variety of food sources and shelter. Patch burning that leaves some ground cover, particularly fallen logs is desirable. Feral predators (e.g. cats, foxes, pigs) impact on sand goanna populations and baiting for dingoes may also affect them. Sand goanna numbers usually decline when Cane Toads arrive in new areas. They eat the toads and consequently are killed as a result of ingesting the toad's poison. Many goannas get killed on roads, often as they scavenge for road kill.

How do they benefit the land I manage? Sand goannas are ecological ‘garbos’, cleaning up rotting carcasses. They feed on snakes, vermin and a wide variety of insects, especially grasshoppers which, in plague proportions may devastate crops and pastures. Their large and deep burrows aid water infiltration into soil.

Similar species: Lace Monitor in eastern parts of the region.

