

## MONITORS IN SRI LANKA

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Water Monitor, *Varanus salvator*



**Plate 1.** Photographed on an estuary near Nugumbe, only a few hundred yards from a hotel, where they were regular scavengers. The monitors are most active early in the morning at about 6 a.m., when they can be seen swimming along river edges and estuaries hunting for small fish, or sometimes small birds. Towards midday, they tend to leave the water and bask in branches over the river bank. The Water Monitor is locally common in Sri Lanka: sometimes it is possible to see as many as 15 or 16 in a morning. Examples of 6 feet in length are frequent.

Bengal Monitor, *Varanus bengalensis*



**Plates 3 and 4.** Photographed in Yala, where it was sometimes possible to see seven or eight at once foraging on a plain of grass and purple flowers. The Monitors averaged 4-5 feet in length. An eagle was observed carrying off a young specimen.

Monitors in Sri Lanka are not persecuted by man: there does not seem to be any human interference. They are also in good physical condition: they are generally healthy, heavily built and well nourished, even obese.



View from this side.

**Plate 2.** Photographed on a sea beach about twenty miles south of Colombo, where Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) lay eggs during the night, and Monitors dig up the nests by day. Rangers transfer the turtle eggs to protected areas; the Monitors attempt to dig under the protective wooden barriers to reach the eggs.

