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Black Roughneck Monitor (*Varanus rudicollis*)

Dumeril's Monitor (*Varanus dumerilii*)

Rough Necked Tree Dwellers

Black roughneck monitors are also known simply as the roughneck, or rough necked monitor. Dumeril's monitors are occasionally called the brown roughneck monitor. The black roughneck monitor is a medium sized, stout monitor species that typically ranges from dark grayish to black in color. The most distinctive identifying feature of this species is its enlarged, pointed scales on the back of the head and neck, lending to the roughneck monitor's common name. The Dumeril's monitor is also a stout, mid-sized species of monitor with a dark tan to brown ground color with indistinct, lighter crossbands of tan, cream colored, to dirty yellow. Hatchling and juvenile Dumeril's monitors may often have brighter reddish-orange heads, and bolder, more vibrant dark and light cross-banding.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Platynota

Family: Varanidae

Genus: Varanus

Subgenus: Emphagusia

Species: *Varanus rudicollis** and *Varanus dumerilii**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, both Dumeril's and black roughneck monitors can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

Both the Dumeril's and Black roughneck monitors are shy, secretive, arboreal species of

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monitors with a wide range over much of southern to southeastern Asia, from southern Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Sumatra, Borneo, to Indonesia and surrounding islands. Due to this species' secretive nature, its range and distribution may be more wide ranging than is currently known. Although both of these monitor species have a wide distribution, they are habitat specialists, occupying the rainforests and other tropical forests near permanent waterbodies with high humidity and mangrove swamps, rivers, and coastal regions.

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Moderate/Intermediate to Advanced.

Size

As adults, Dumeril's, or brown roughneck monitors can range in size from 3 ½ to 4 ½ feet, or 42 to 54 inches. Black roughneck monitors, as adults, can reach size potential of 3 to 5 feet, or 36 to 60 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must also be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling roughneck and Dumeril's monitors can be started out in a 10 to 20 gallon tall arboreal enclosure, but will soon require larger accommodations. Enclosure size should be increased accordingly depending on the animal's size. If standard glass terrariums with screen tops are used at any point, ensure that adequate humidity and temperatures are maintained using additional steps to retain it. Adult rough necked and Dumeril's monitors will require a minimum of a six foot by three foot arboreal terrarium or enclosure. Very large, custom designed pens or enclosures are perhaps the most suitable housing for most mid to large sized monitors. As with other monitors, these monitors also powerful diggers, and should also be provided with substrates that enable burrowing and retain humidity well such as chemical and pesticide free potting soil, cypress mulch, orchid bark substrates. Be sure to provide at least 18 to 24 inches of substrate. Monitors in general are very intelligent, alert and perceptive animals, and will require sufficient levels of safety, security, and stimulation and enrichment in order to do well in captivity. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, slabs, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. A large enough water bowl or dish that they can readily enter and exit from that can work with one's enclosure setup and arrangement is also strongly recommended for maintaining adequate longer term hydration, humidity, and quality of life for these monitors. Water should be changed or filtered regularly at a minimum of every other day to maintain cleanliness and sanitary conditions. Roughneck and Dumeril's monitors are arboreal species, and will climb readily if given the opportunity. An arboreal nest box or hide installed off the ground serves as an ideal feature for these monitors. Humidity should be maintained at 60 to 85%, but access to dry areas should be still available. A commercially available misting or fogging system can be used to help maintain hydration and humidity.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Roughneck monitors will tolerate a wide thermal gradient of temperatures, from 75 to 95 degrees F, and basking temperatures of 120 to 140 degrees F. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop to around 70 to 75 degrees F. These monitors also require overhead UVA, UVB incandescent and fluorescent lighting using the appropriate wattage bulbs, ceramic heat emitters, black or "night" bulbs, or other heating

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elements. Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, black roughneck monitors will feed on a variety of small arboreal mammals, birds, eggs, frogs, and smaller reptiles, as well as a variety of insects, arachnids, worms, and other invertebrates. Dumeril's monitors, in the wild, are believed to be crab specialists, although they will also feed on snails, mollusks, small fish, frogs, insects, and other invertebrates, as well as smaller rodents.

In captivity, variety is essential to a proper and adequate monitor diet. Roughneck and Dumeril's monitors can be fed a variety of feeder insects of appropriate size including crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms supplemented with vitamin D3 and calcium. Frozen-thawed rodents of appropriate size and raw food items such as turkey, beef, or eggs can also be offered, but sparingly, if at all, as these food items are high in fat and protein for monitors. It is also important to remember not to overfeed any monitors, as they can become very prone to obesity. Feeding schedules can depend on the age, size, and overall health of your monitor, but typically, an appropriate feeding regime for young and hatchling monitors should be two to three times weekly. Most monitors are very alert, intelligent and personable species that can become food aggressive when in the presence of food, and therefore require additional care when handling. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

As with most monitor species, black roughneck and Dumeril's monitors can adapt well to captivity, handling, and interaction, but must be handled and interacted with frequently, and they may be initially shy. A large, well-furnished enclosure with sufficient refuge and basking opportunities for these monitors to feel secure and established are important aspects for acclimating them in captivity. When they are agitated, these monitors may tail whip, inflate their throats by hissing to appear larger and more intimidating, and/or attempt to scratch or bite if handled or restrained incorrectly. These monitors, and other monitors in general, are animals that require considerable amounts of regular time, patience, and commitment in order to become docile, handleable adult animals. Many different techniques and mindsets are out there with regards to handling and working with these reptiles, which can certainly go into far greater depth than the scope of this basic care sheet. Many believe a more hands off approach is more successful overall, and allowing the animal to gradually and routinely become accustomed to their keeper's presence, to being touched, and handled. Others may choose to practice a more direct, routine handling approach, which may or may not be effective, but often unfortunately causes greater stress and/or injury to the keeper and the animal. Once in the hand, hatchling monitors can be handled with both hands cupped with care not to drop or restrain them tightly. An adult monitor (as well as other species of large lizards) should always receive adequate bodily support from underneath using the hand, and arm for support. Additional restraint can be made by tucking or pinning the animal's tail or hind quarters between the arm and body as well. Each animal is an individual, and these techniques may not be effective for all monitors, but are nonetheless the most commonly utilized. Monitors in general certainly are not for everyone, but with the right techniques and husbandry, can make for very intelligent and personable pets.

Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens

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Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility.

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