**Photo Credit: LLLReptile*

Timor Monitor *(Varanus [Subgenus Odatria] timorensis)*

Uncommon Tree Dwellers

The Timor monitor is a fairly small dwarf, arboreal monitor species that can vary in dorsal or ground color from blackish, light to dark olive or olive brown, brown, to reddish brown with lighter colored spots or ocelli along the dorsum that can be whitish or cream colored, to yellow or sometimes even bluish in color. The head and snout are fairly pointed for a monitor species, and the tail is semi-prehensile. Timor monitors are an arboreal to semi arboreal diurnal dwarf monitor species that will thermoregulate and seek refuge in tree or rock crevices or cavities. These dwarf monitors are indigenous to Indonesia, and more specifically, on the islands of Timor, Savu, and Rote, as well as East Timor within this range. When it comes to this species' habitat preferences and requirements, Timor monitors occupy the dry to tropical rainforests and other forests and woodlands, where they are often arboreal and occupy the low canopies of tree trunks and their branches, as well as tall shrubs and bushes, and other above ground vegetation used for foraging, thermoregulating, and seeking refuge.

As with many other species of monitors in the subgenus Odatria, timor monitors are an arboreal to semi arboreal diurnal dwarf monitor species that will thermoregulate and seek refuge in tree or rock crevices or cavities. These dwarf monitors are gaining popularity in the United States pet industry, and can make for very unique, personable, and enjoyable dwarf monitor species to maintain, even among the subgenus of Odatria, for the more intermediate to moderate level enthusiast.

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: Odatria
Species: *Varanus timorensis**
**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity
If provided the proper care, Timor monitors can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat
The Timor monitor is a species of relatively small to medium sized, arboreal monitor indigenous to Indonesia. More specifically, these monitors occur on the islands of Timor, Savu, and Rote, as well as East Timor within this range. When it comes to this species' habitat preferences and requirements, Timor monitors occupy the dry to tropical rainforests and other forests and woodlands, where they are often arboreal and occupy the low canopies of tree trunks and their branches, as well as tall shrubs and bushes, and other above ground vegetation used for foraging, thermoregulating, and seeking refuge.

Origin/History
Varanus timorensis (Gray, 1831).

It is uncertain as to when Timor monitors first began to be kept or imported for herpetoculture. However, these small semi-arboreal monitors would see a high demand, which lead to their national protection in Indonesia, where they were likely exported from. Timor monitors are now frequently bred in captivity, although a small number of them are also still imported. Wild-caught specimens would often be more nervous and difficult to handle.

Experience Level Required
Intermediate/Moderate.

Size
Hatchling to juvenile Timor monitors typically range from 4.0 to 8.0 inches in snout to tail length. As adults, these dwarf monitors may range from 15.0 to 24.0 inches in total snout to tail length depending on species, subspecies, and locality. They seldom exceed 30.0 inches as most adults in total snout to tail length. Maximum snout to vent length reaches up to about 7.0 to 11.2 inches snout to vent length (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure
Enclosure System: Semi-Arboreal to Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling Timor monitors can initially be started off in anywhere from a 20 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but this enclosure size should be increased accordingly. For a single adult Timor monitor, an enclosure of a minimum of a 40 to 55 gallon tall arboreal terrarium or enclosure or larger depending on age, size, subspecies, and locality. A deep layer of at least three to four or more inches of substrate should be added to the enclosure, as Timor monitors are strong burrowers. Commercially available orchid bark, cypress mulch, chemical and pesticide free potting soil, or coconut fiber substrates are acceptable for these monitors, but must not be toxic. Most monitors will frequently disrupt and uproot most plants and other enclosure furnishings, but should still be provided sufficient hiding and basking areas in the form of log, rock, or cork hides. A large, sturdy water bowl or dish or appropriate size that ideally allows for easy entry and exit, as well as soaking should also be provided as well. These monitors can also be misted at least two to three times weekly to help maintain hydration and humidity. Sphagnum moss can also be used as a substrate in hides to help increase humidity. Being largely arboreal species, Timor monitors can and will climb if provided the opportunity, and should be provided adequate vertical and diagonal branches, logs, rocks, custom inserted dowels, or other opportunities to enable and provide for climbing and basking opportunities.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

For lighting and heating, Timors require adequate temperatures, as their biology and natural history indicate appropriately. Maintain ambient temperatures inside the enclosure from 75 to 85 degrees F that can be allowed to drop about 10 degrees F from this at night. Timor monitors will also bask, and require basking temperatures of anywhere from 120 to 140 degrees F. This can be provided through overhead UVA/UVB lighting of appropriate wattage, under tank heating pads (UTHS), ceramic or radiant heat emitters, and/or red bulbs. Temperatures should also be adequately monitored using a reliable thermostat as well. 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, particularly water bowls and substrates intended for raising humidity levels (such as cypress mulch, peat moss, or sphagnum moss). 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. Most monitors are able to tolerate a wide gradient of overall relative humidity levels within their enclosures ranging from lows within the 30 to 50% range, to highs as much as 70 to 75% or more, through means of providing them with the correct and suitable substrates, as well as other humid hides and retreats. These husbandry components are perhaps the best ways of ensuring the proper humidity levels for your monitors in captivity.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, Timor monitors are primarily carnivorous to insectivorous, and will feed on a wide variety of food including insects and other invertebrates, crustaceans, mollusks, and other invertebrates, as well as many small vertebrates including small mammals, birds, bird and reptile eggs, amphibians, and other smaller reptiles. They will also eat carrion, or dead and decaying plant and animal matter as well.

In captivity, variety is essential to a proper and adequate monitor diet. Timor 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

Timor monitors are a species that may initially be nervous and skittish, particularly newly acclimated specimens or those that have otherwise been only recently acquired. They may bite, claw, tail whip, defecate, or otherwise attempt to flee or escape from what they perceive to be a potential threat or predator. However, with regular handling, interaction, captive born timor monitors can become more tame and personable pets to maintain provided that they are handled and interacted with regularly in a calm and deliberative manner.

Most monitors are very different than many other reptiles in terms of their intelligence and perception, and each individual animal may differ in their temperament or personality. Some will come to acclimate with humans and being handled within a matter of a few months, while others may take many years. Two different trains of thought are out there when it comes to handling or "taming" one's monitors. The first is to handle and interact with them daily until they become used to or acclimated to handling. This method sometimes works, and sometimes does not, and depends on the individual animal and one's circumstances. This can also lead to the opposite

desired effect, and make an animal further stressed. The other method, or train of thought is to simply leave them alone, and an added or increased trust among one's monitor may come over time with regular cage and enclosure cleaning, maintenance, or other routine duties. Over time, slow steps may be taken to continue to gain trust with, and eventually become able to handle and interact with them. With this second train of thought, many monitors will become more bold and curious, and interactive naturally on their own than if they are forced out of their hiding places or other areas in order to be handled. Moving slowly and deliberately is always better to help make the animal feel secure, rather than fast, rapid, or jerky movements.

Always keep in mind with regards to the second method, however, that all monitors are capable of delivering bites or scratches, and so some proper precautions when it comes to handling and interacting with them are always recommended. Even animals that can normally be considered "tame" can unexpectedly become threatened, or if one's hands and arms smell like their normal food. Any new animal should of course also be allowed to acclimate to its environment and surroundings before handling attempts are made. Overall, each animal is an individual, and these techniques may not be effective for all monitors, but are nonetheless the most commonly utilized. **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**

Contact

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