

Gould's Goanna

Varanus gouldii (Gray, 1838)

Size

Up to 1.6 m total length

Subspecies

- *Varanus gouldii gouldii* (continental Australia but not arid interior)
- *V. g. flavirufus* (arid interior of Australia)

Description

Body colour varies with location, from light yellow to dark grey to almost black, numerous small light and dark spots or flecks which are aligned transversely and appear as narrow cross bands. A pale-edged black bar extends through the eye and back towards the neck. Limbs are often white, cream or yellow spotted. The tail is light brown to black with light coloured scales tending to form yellow rings. The last few centimetres of the tail are usually white, cream or yellow. The tail is approximately one and a half times longer than the head and body. Their belly is pale-yellow to dirty white, often with irregular grey spots.

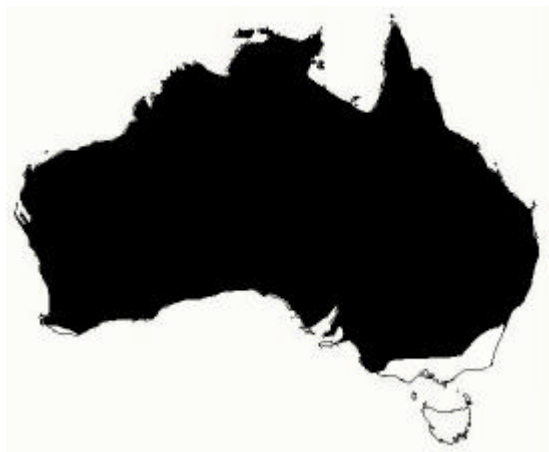


Photo. Babs & Bert Wells/the Department of Conservation and Land Management

Other common names

Sand monitor, race-horse goanna

Distribution



Key To Map: Black = Present distribution

Occurs in most parts of Australia except the far south-east and forests of the east coast which experience high rainfall.

Habitat

In Western Australia, it is common on the Swan Coastal Plain in most habitat types, with a preference for sandy soils in open woodlands. Less common in jarrah woodlands of the Darling Range. Elsewhere in Australia, they are found in coastal sclerophyll (leafy) forests and sandy deserts.

Behaviour

Gould's goanna is a day-active, ground-dwelling reptile. They burrow beneath slabs of rock, beneath rubbish piles, hollow logs or dense litter. Large individuals will often raise themselves by their hind legs and tail to view their surroundings, or when on the defence.

Diet

The diet comprises reptiles, insects, small mammals, and carrion.

Breeding

Gould's goanna lays eggs, which it deposits and leaves in a burrow to incubate. Little else is known of their breeding patterns.

Threatening processes

Anecdotal evidence suggests that young are vulnerable to predation by foxes. Sightings are common of younger individuals in areas that have been fox-baited compared to unbaited areas.

Conservation status

2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	Not Listed
Western Australia Wildlife Conservation Act	Not Listed
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act	Not Listed

Management in Western Australia

- Ongoing fox baiting in Western Australia as part of the Western Shield fox-control initiative will indirectly benefit goannas by reducing potential predators of the young, and increasing their food sources.

Other interesting facts

- If startled, Gould's goanna will run for cover with great speed, hence the name 'race horse goanna'.

Selected references

Cogger H.G. (1992). Reptiles and amphibians of Australia. Reed Books Australia.

Bush, B., Maryan, B., Browne-Cooper, R., and Robinson, D. (1995). A guide to the reptiles and frogs of the Perth region. University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, Western Australia.

Website links

http://www.naturebase.net/projects/west_shield.html

<http://www.westernwildlife.com.au/western/reptiles/goulds.htm>