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# NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

## *VARANUS BENGALENSIS* (Bengal Monitor) NESTING

While driving through King's Sanctuary in Nagarhole National Park, India late one morning on 8 December 2006, a Bengal monitor, *Varanus bengalensis* (estimated to be ca. 70-80 cm in total length) was sighted on the side of the lightly-traveled road. It was first presumed that the lizard was dead given its lack of movement. Upon closer inspection, the lizard was positioned with its hind legs down inside a burrow located ca. 15-30 cm from the edge of the road. When poked with a stick by a park ranger to see if it was alive, the monitor failed to flinch or move and remained extremely rigid. By gently moving it aside slightly with a stick, several eggs were revealed within the burrow, although the total number of eggs could not be determined.

The surrounding area consisted of scrubby undergrowth interspersed with large trees, partially cleared for about 20 m from the road. No rainfall was encountered that day however the ground appeared as though it had rained relatively recently. December falls within the wet season of the region, and vegetation in the area was lush and green. Only one other *V. bengalensis* was observed in Nagarhole National Park, emerging and fleeing from a burrow.

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Figure 1. *Varanus bengalensis* nesting. Photograph by Meriel Weston