
NEWS NOTES

Oakland Zoo hatches *Varanus beccarii*

According to a recent AZA press release, the Oakland Zoo has successfully hatched a Black Tree monitor (*Varanus beccarii*). Three eggs were laid on 25 February 2007, however only one was viable. This egg hatched on 14 August 2007. It was not specified whether the zoo will keep the individual or transfer it to another zoological institution.

Source: *Connect Magazine*, February 2008: 35

Large monitor lizard terrorizes village

A large lizard, originally purported to be a Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*), had been sighted in the bushes around Butibam village in Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. Since the initial sighting, several other villagers came forth with additional sightings and claims of the lizard terrorizing the village, including eating dogs, leaving large footprints, and tearing down vegetation. When interviewed, several villagers said that they would not go into their gardens for fear of the giant lizard.

An expatriate residing in the area came forth claiming that his pet *V. komodoensis*, which he brought back to Papua New Guinea as an egg which hatched, had escaped, and offered a reward of 1000 Kina for the lizard to be killed. Later reports suggest that this claim was likely a hoax.

Intensive searches of the area by the army and Department of Environmental Conservation failed to find any such lizard, and it is suspected that the alleged lizard is not a *V. komodoensis*, and could be a Crocodile monitor (*V. salvadorii*), which attains a substantial size and is indigenous to Papua New Guinea, although no records of *V. salvadorii* currently exist for Morobe Province (see Horn et al., 2007. On the distribution of the Papuan monitor *Varanus salvadorii* [Peters & Doria, 1878] in New Guinea. *Mertensiella* 16: 25-43.). Search efforts were called off because there had been no new leads and the search was costing too much.

Sources: *The National*, 7 February 2008; *Associated Press*, 12 February 2008

USDA seeks to poison rats and monitor lizards on Cocos Island

Recent plans have been proposed by the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Inspection Service division, to use a combination of two poisons, diphacinone and brodifacoum, to diminish the predators of the endangered Ko'ko bird, or Guam Rail (*Gallirallus owstoni*) on Cocos Island, Marianas. The poisons will be used to cut down on the rat and monitor lizard (*Varanus indicus*) populations on Cocos, both of which pose a threat to the avifauna of the island, which is now a bird sanctuary. Eighty percent of the *V. indicus* population on Cocos is planned to be killed off

Opponents of the plan argue that the poisons will affect many other organisms on and around the island including aquatic animals, birds and mammals, including humans. Merizo residents stress that they do not want the local monitor lizard population to be harmed. Many feel that the island is perfect for them and a place of their own, being located away from roads and domestic chickens.

Source: *Marianas Variety*, 4 March 2008

Komodo Dragons hatch at Surabaya Zoo

According to a recent news report, the Surabaya Zoo, located in East Java, Indonesia, has successfully hatched a clutch of 14 *Varanus komodoensis* eggs. The recent 14 hatchlings, in addition to an earlier clutch of 13, have brought the total number of *V. komodoensis* maintained by the zoo to 41.

Source: Independent Television News Limited, 12 March 2008



Male *Varanus komodoensis*. Miami Metrozoo. Photograph by **Steve Connors**