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VaraNews

VaraNews is published by ©Varanix, the Varanid Information eXchange, dedicated to the responsible captive care of monitor lizards through education and the open exchange of all information pertaining to Varanidae.

General Info

VaraNews is currently 8 pages long and appears every 2 months (I've been told I have a tremendous grasp of the obvious on more than one occasion). There have been a few suggestions to change this; one is to publish on a monthly basis, another is going to a magazine format. Anything is possible given the resources, such as, participation and funding. With continued growth and support, Varanix will satisfy these requests as soon as possible. (There are several inquiries about Varanix each week, a number of which result in new members.) Allow me to share my personal view of the next stages of "growth potential" for VaraNews:

a. Increase the number of pages to 16 or 20 for each issue. This obviously means an increase in the material submitted for publication, which will hopefully come about as Varanix grows. Once it is possible to maintain this number of pages bi-monthly, it will be time to consider publishing monthly.

b. Publish an annual journal, or collection of papers, in magazine format with color photos. Accomplishing this is more a question of economics than source material. This is something under investigation and could hopefully start taking shape before year's end.

Several letters have been received in which the author expressed a desire to participate but didn't real know what he or she had to offer. This seems to be the case with those of you relatively new to varano-mania. Do not assume that what you have learned, everyone else must already know. And even if you have seen a topic presented, this doesn't mean the book is closed on the subject.

If your animal is healthy, something must be right. What do you feed your animal and how often? (For example, one reader not enthused about dealing with rodents, either live or frozen, has submitted a description of her *V. salvator's* "surf 'n turf" diet.)

Describe your animal's "residence", such as size and type of heating, lighting, furnishings, etc. If you don't want to write much, send in some photos accompanied by a brief description of each.

If one of your varanids has had medical problems, you are urged to write up a description of the situation, including first indication & symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and outcome. Sharing this type of experience is one of the most valuable ways you can help others avoid the same problems. This in turn increases the overall healthy, captive population. Of course, your name need not appear.

Are you familiar with the geographic region in which varanids are found? As many of us strive to recreate a slice of the wild, it helps to know what we are trying to achieve. What is the climate like? What types of vegetation are there? What does the animal eat in the wild?

Perhaps the simplest thing to do is submit your questions. One member expressed hope that articles on "disease prevention, recognition and control" would appear in upcoming issues. He also suggested a tutorial on medicines that could go into a "Home Medicine Cabinet" for the treatment of minor problems (though acknowledging that medical problems of an unknown origin should always be addressed by a qualified veterinarian). I second this request... any takers?

Regarding submission of articles, page 2 lists the preferred computer data formats. Typewritten pages are also quite acceptable. Of course, handwritten material will not be turned away (though written in crayon on toilet paper is going a bit too far). If you dictate your material on audio tape, it will be transcribed.

Legislation: Keep the Beat(ing) From Going On

In VaraNews 1(4):2-3, mention was made of a legislative packet from The American Federation of Herpetoculturists, designed to be "useful in helping herpetoculturists protect and preserve their rights to practice responsible herpetoculture". Legislative Packet #1 was requested and received (within a week

of the request, I might add). Although the emphasis of the collection of 7 reprints is on large boas and pythons, much of the info applies across the board to all herps.

Section 44.0305 — It Is The Law!

The packet includes a reprint of the San Diego city law governing animal control and regulation. The section on Wild Animals and Other Prohibited Species states it is illegal to keep:

> *"... any monitor lizards species (Family Varanidae) that attain an adult weight over ten (10) pounds or an adult overall length of over three (3) feet..."*

If you were faced with such legislation, how many of you would be forced to teach your varanids to bark, fetch and answer to the name 'Spot'? (Note the optimistic use of "if" as opposed to "when".) Accompanying the reprint is a letter authored by Jeffery Nunan, AFH Legislative Action Coordinator, to AFH members. It begins:

> *In reading Section 44.0305, you will notice the restrictive language relative to monitors (Varanidae). Because no complaint about lizards had ever been received by Animal Control of San Diego County and because of the great legal exposure faced by the large number of people who keep boas or pythons in San Diego, the AFH felt compelled to focus its attention on the problem affecting the most people, that is, the high profile boa/python three-feet law.*
>
> *As you can see, we were successful in having passed the kind of law we wanted with regard to boas and pythons.*
>
> *If and when a problem should arise with the keeping of large monitors, the AFH will again become involved and work to modify this section of 44.0305.*

The letter finishes with Mr. Nunan expressing his willingness to discuss the steps involved in the law's negotiations and its passage.

There are two important points to that can be learned from the San Diego experience:

1. Given the expertise, organization and resources, it is possible to provide some direction to legislators sculpting anti-*everything* legislation.
2. If a group (such as Varanidae) doesn't have any specific representation, its battle may not be fought.

Also included in the legislative packet is a reprint of the guidelines for the responsible keeping of large constrictors from Philippe de Vosjoli's book on the General Care and Maintenance of Burmese Pythons. The author stresses that handling of giant snakes is not recommended without another individual at least within earshot. This philosophy can also be applied to

VaraNews is the newsletter of Varanix, the Varanid Information eXchange. Varanix was founded to promote responsible care of varanids in captivity through education and the open exchange of information.

A primary function of the eXchange is to build a collective knowledge base that will serve to improve our understanding of the family Varanidae. The goal of these efforts is to improve their chances of survival, both in captivity and in the wild.

Editorial submissions:

May be written, typed or in electronic form (preferred). Both PC and Mac diskettes are acceptable, in ASCII, MS Word, WordPerfect or RTF format.
Please indicate any special conditions of publication, such as withholding mention of name/organization or giving credit to a person or publication.

Back Issues:

To receive the issues listed below, send:

50¢ for Number 0, $1each for Vol1Num1 thru Vol1Num4

Inquiries and Membership:

One-year membership in Varanix costs:

- $10 US/year (USA)
- $12 US/year (foreign)

Members receive VaraNews, the newsletter of Varanix. VaraNews is published bi-monthly the beginning of every even-numbered month.

VaraNews is free to zoos upon request and to herp societies participating in a newsletter exchange program.

Address all inquiries & memberships to:

Greg Naclerio
Varanix
8726D S. Sepulveda Bl. #243
Los Angeles, CA 90045
USA

Telephone: (213) 768-8669

Messages may also be left via computer & modem on:

- Herpetology Online Network - (215) 464-3562
  (Herp-Net is a US-based electronic forum which can be accessed at any modem speed. The caller pays only for the phone call.)
- CompuServe - send mail to user ID: 71320,721

Specify "monitor" or "varanid" as the keyword/ subject

Editorial Review Board: Frank Braun

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large monitors, especially those of an unruly nature. Mr. de Vosjoli comments:

> *"The probability of any serious problem occurring when handling such snakes is very remote but the AFH position is that herpetoculturists, **out of responsibility to themselves, to family members and to other herpetoculturists**, should handle and maintain large snakes in a manner that significantly prevents the likelihood of any accident or incident."*

When acquiring a monitor lizard, you accept ALL responsibility for its actions. If you get bitten, **it's your fault** and hopefully you will be more alert in the future. If a family member gets bitten, **it's your fault** and hopefully your relative will forgive you and not turn you in to the authorities or sue you. If someone else gets bitten, **it's your fault** and there's a good chance that: your animal will be taken away and destroyed, you will be sued, and anti-herp legislation explicitly targeting monitors will be proposed.

No matter how long you have had your animal and how well you (think you) know your animal, ~~sh~~ stuff happens. Fr'example, my 5 foot (TL) Nile monitor had been non-aggressive for a couple of years. (I can never bring myself to use the word "tame"; it implies a certain blind, unquestioning trust. "Pet" is another word that just doesn't fit when describing varanids.) I had not even seen him take a serious defensive stance during this period. One bright and sunny day I was moving some clay pots about and accidentally set one down on the tip of his tail. Startled, he instinctively lashed out with his tail, catching me across the back. (Instinctively, my eyes began to water.)

This was not a case of abnormal behavior; it was a *mere* accident that fortunately took place in the privacy of my home. What if a similar incident had happened in public and it was someone else who had received the blow? It is doubtful that anyone would be receptive to an explanation of a monitor's instinctive, defensive behavior. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are or who's at fault: Actions speak louder than words. And if the disastrous moment had been captured on video...

"Going public" with your animal is a two-edged sword. It's an impressive way to educate the public about the beauty and value of these creatures. It can also quickly turn to disaster within the flick of a tongue. When you begin thinking you've got "everything under control", that's the time to be most concerned!

[Latebreaking Note: In his message to members of The American Federation of Herpetoculturists, The Vivarium 3(1), President Philippe de Vosjoli lists the key goals for the AFH in 1991. Included is the establishment of position statements on "the keeping of monitor lizards by the private sector". (The other 2 areas cover the keeping of large constrictors and venomous reptiles by the private sector.) It is encouraging that this visible, growing organization (over 3000 individual members) is giving special attention to varanids. Look for more details in the next issue of VaraNews.]

Projects

This section will discuss the projects which have been suggested by the readership. If you are looking for ways to help Varanix grow and prosper, this section is for you. You are welcome to solicit member assistance for projects on which you are working. Send in a brief description of the project and assistance required for inclusion in this section.

Phylogenetic Review of Varanidae and You

Robert Sprackland of the California Academy of Sciences is engaged in a review of the family of monitor lizards and is looking for slides or photos of unusual, live varanids. The photos are intended to be used as references in his study and are not intended for publication at this time. Dr. Sprackland will arrange to have slides copied and returned to you. Please indicate any conditions under which the photos/slides are being provided. (Of course, donations of photos/slides are most welcome.) Please address all correspondence to:

Robert Sprackland
California Academy of Sciences, Dept. of Herpetology
Golden Gate Park
San Francisco CA 94118.

Updates

The following items have been discussed in previous issues of VaraNews:

Coffee Cups & T-shirts

Mention was made of these items as a means of raising funds for various projects (such as translation of varanid articles from German to English). The cups will have the Varanix logo in 2 colors on one side and another graphic on the other. The T-shirts will have an enlarged Varanix logo in 2 colors. (Other graphics are also in the works.)

In either case, production runs under 100 units are pretty expensive per unit. Before proceeding, I would like to do a survey of how much interest there will be. (Though all items will probably be sold at some point, we're talking cash flow. At least the production costs need to be covered at the outset.)

To determine if there will be enough orders, please let Varanix know if you are interested in either item. Feel free to leave a message on the answering machine like: "Name: Hildegard Herper. I'm interested in 10 coffee cups and 25 T-shirts." If enough 'pre-orders' are received, pricing and availability will be announced in the next issue.

UV (black) Lights Revisited

An article is being researched about the use and effectiveness of black lights as a source of ultraviolet radiation in captive varanid environments. If you can offer any input on the subject, please contact me or send in a copy of any papers which could be of use.

Short Stuff x 2

I'm working on 2 short pamphlets: one is a primer on monitor lizards, written with the younger set in mind. Another relatively easy-to-achieve project is a brief Question/Answer fact sheet of the most commonly asked questions about varanids. These pamphlets will be useful as handouts when participating in herp shows or doing show 'n tell type events.

If you have any ideas/ sketches you would like to share or would like to review the pamphlets, let me know.

Species-specific Care Sheets

To those of you who volunteered for this project, I'll contact you sometime before the next issue of VaraNews to discuss how we can get things going.

Monitor Rescue Program

Varanix members are encouraged to let herp societies, zoos, animal control, etc. know about this program. (A Monitor Rescue 'purpose' statement is being prepared for distribution to such organizations.)

The most cost-effective way to place a monitor will be a direct transfer from the person giving up the animal to the new home. Incurring 2 air transportation fees (first to a foster home, then to the new home) could easily put the 'cost' of the animal above the price of a store-bought animal, making it more difficult to place.

Subsequent issues of VaraNews will include a list of the names & phone numbers of Monitor Rescue foster homes/contacts. [Refer to VaraNews 1(4):3-4 for a description of the program.] If you wish to act in this capacity and have not already contacted Varanix, please provide:

- your name and phone number
- species, number and size of animals for which you can provide temporary housing

As Wanda Olson stated in her program guidelines, please be certain you are ready and able to care for additional animals.

Potential adoptors: You are invited to send in your name and phone number if you would like to be put on the waiting list. Please include the following information:

- a description or photo of your housing setup
- the type of animal which interests you (e.g., species, size, sex)
- a brief 'backgrounder' of your experience with varanids (This is not to pry into your personal life, but to aid in determining the right home for each animal)

When an animal becomes available, you will be contacted by one of the Monitor Rescue contacts. To receive the animal, you will be asked to pay all shipping charges plus a $5 adoption fee.

Méli–mélo

This section is where you will find the various and sundry, including your amusing stories, quips and anecdotes.

You'd Better Sit Down!

Did you know that pythons are venomous? According to an article entitled *Don't Tread on These Pets*, "Pythons can be vicious, and are venomous, whereas boas are not". But, that's not the killer. The following quote appeared when discussing the convenience of feeding a snake:

> *When people ask him why have a snake for a pet, he tells them, "It's an animal I can abuse, but still not hurt it." Simple TLC, such as cleaning out their cage and making sure they're in a properly heated environment, makes snakes a good choice as pets.*

The quote was attributed to Glen Carlton, licensed animal technician with the Los Angeles Chapter of the SPCA. One can understand the point Mr. Carlton intended to make (assuming this was not an out-and-out misquote). It was the responsibility of the editor to select a more appropriate word than "abuse" to describe the convenient nature of snake keeping, especially in a magazine *for* animal lovers.

The article appeared in Volume 1 Number 1 of Animal House Magazine, a "commercial magazine published monthly by: Animal House Magazine, Inc., 6914 Katella Ave., Suite 179, Cypress, CA 90630". (In all fairness, the article went on to discuss the need for proper animal husbandry, with Mr. Carlton stressing the importance of avoiding impulse buying and of researching an animal's needs prior to purchase. But, what will the reader remember most?)

If you are inclined to write to the publisher, DO NOT get insulting or out of order. Write only as a concerned citizen who cares for all animals and truth in information, but not as someone who has a special interest in reptiles. Otherwise, your obvious bias will lessen the impact of your letter. This advice is given by many herp societies and organizations experienced in sponsoring letter-writing campaigns to government officials, etc.

The point of sharing these quotes is not to attack the publisher of the magazine, but to stress anew the

importance of accurate representation of the facts, avoiding potential misinterpretation and misinformation at all costs.

Southeast Asia in Southeast USA

In response to previous requests for the *where's and what's* of herp hot spots, Mike Fost of Zoo Atlanta offers the following:

Currently on exhibit at Zoo Atlanta are a pair of green tree monitors, *V. prasinus kordensis*, a trio of black tree monitors, *V. p. beccarii*, and a single Timor monitor, *V. timorensis*. The 150+ other herps and arthropods on display include gavials, Morelet's crocodiles and giant salamanders. (Mike adds that he is also to be found somewhere in their midst.). The address is: Zoo Atlanta, 800 Cherokee Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30315, phone (404)624 5600.

The Bronx Zoo has large *V. salvators* in the Wild Asia exhibit, plus other monitors in the reptile house. Rumor has it that the Birmingham Zoo has a nice, large Dumeril's monitor, *V. dumerilii*, exhibit... Mike will check it out this summer and report back. Audobon Park (New Orleans, LA) has Papua (crocodile) monitors, *V. salvadorii*.

Recommended are visits to the Dallas and Forth Worth zoos, whose "large and varied collections are well worth the trip". The Dallas collection includes Gray's monitor, *V. grayi*, a spiny-tailed monitor, *V. acanthurus* and possibly perenties, *V. giganteus* and sand goannas, *V. gouldii*. (The latter two species may not currently be on exhibit.) About 1-1/2 hours away in Texas-sized traffic, the Fort Worth zoo has black roughneck monitors, *V. rudicollis*.

(I suggest you call before making the trip, especially if you are interested in a specific animal. I once read in a newsletter that The X Zoo had 3 large Nile monitors on display. The following weekend I made the 3 hour journey only to find out that it was a case of mistaken identity and in actuality, there was only one large *V. salvator*. It was still a nice visit, but not what I had counted on.)

A Trip from Africa

by Mark K. Bayless

How do African monitor lizards (Lepidosauria: Varanidae) arrive in our local pet shop(s)? The demand stemming from the growing popularity of exotic pets in the United States is certainly not being met through captive breeding programs. It is the importation of live reptiles (and amphibians) that has grown to meet the demand. This article focuses on the exotic species of monitor lizards most frequently imported from Africa: the savannah monitor (*Varanus exanthematicus*), the Nile monitor (*V. niloticus*), the white-throat monitor (*V. albigularis*) and, rarely, the desert monitor (*V. griseus*).

In countries such as Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Tanzania, there is a significant export trade of these species. The savannah, Nile, white-throat and desert monitor lizards are sought after with considerable interest, for the mighty dollar speaks loudly in Africa's impoverished local economies. But, just what takes place during the importation of African varanids to Miami and New York?

Some years ago, I spoke with an animal exporter/importer who told me he routinely engaged in the transport of "suitcases full" of savannah monitor lizards from West Africa to Miami, Florida. He explained it to me this way, "I'd fly to Accra, Lomé, or Porto-Novo (Ghana, Togo and Benin, respectively), hire some kids to go into the bush and get all the monitor lizards they could find. Monitors were quite common throughout the region. I gave the kids fifty-cents per reptile and would get enough lizards to fill a suitcase in a day! When I had all I could carry, I would hop on a plane with the suitcase and fly back to Miami, selling the lizards for twenty-five bucks each. This flying back and forth didn't give me much profit. Later on, I would find an African who wanted to visit his family in West Africa and would pay him seventy-five bucks towards his air-fare/expenses to do the bagging for me. On his return to Miami, I ended up with another suitcase full of lizards. I made some profit that way!"

(When asked why he ceased this profit-making practice, he told me he could make more money in the bio-tech business. I have not seen him in a few years, but understand he is still doing bio-tech work with proteins and continuing his college work towards a BS in biology.)

In a telephone conversation with a well known reptile pet shop proprietor/dealer in Florida, he told me ninety percent (90%) of the savannah monitor lizards imported into the United States come from Togo. Nine percent (9%) come from Ghana. (There are three people who are primarily responsible for the exportation of African varanids from Ghana, the most productive exporter being a woman.) The remaining one percent (1%) come from Tanzania (McQuade, pers. comm.).

Furthermore, it is known that there are four to five African exporters of savannah monitors who also export Nile and, very rarely, white-throat monitors. It is further noted that one-third or more of the shipments from Africa include varanids that are suffering from parasites, bacterial infections and dehydration (McQuade, pers. comm.). Many specimens are too young, while others succumb because they could not breathe in the cramped, over-

crowded baggage they are enclosed in while in flight from Africa.

Approximately 2,109,571 live reptiles entered the United States in 1970 (National Museum of Natural History). Table 1 lists the number of live African varanid imports from 1975 to 1986 as recorded by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The increase in imports is an indication of the growing popularity of maintaining varanids in captivity. [*Varanus albigularis* is not listed in Table 1 because prior to 1986, this species was considered a subspecies of *V. exanthematicus* and was identified as *V.e. albigularis*. Since then, *V.e. albigularis* has been reclassified as *V. albigularis* by Dr. Donald G. Broadley (pers. comm.) and by Wolfgang Böhme (1989).]

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
V. exanth.	10	9	36	1071	1588	924	1212	434	655	1577	5448	-	12,964
V. griseus	-	-	6	5	1	-	-	-	4	2	8	3	29
V. niloticus	1	6	12	586	1189	479	1107	169	593	1156	1392	1049	7,739

How does this compare to the skin trade for the same period of time from 1975 to 1986? The minimum net skin trade of these species exported abroad is a staggering 3,838,013. The breakdown is as follows: 883,871 for *V. exanthematicus*, 106,076 for *V. griseus* and 3,048,066 for *V. niloticus*. Whereas the live trade is more selective and has a greater interest in the exotic species, the skin trade places its emphasis on consistent, large supplies of skins for its market for shoes, handbags and wallets (Luxmore, 1989). Clearly, export for the skin market has a much greater detrimental effect on the survival of African varanids than does the export of live lizards.

To give a more recent indication of the popularity of live African varanids, Table 2 lists the number of *V. exanthematicus*, *V. griseus*, *V. niloticus* and *V. albigularis* available for sale at seven pet shops (on the east and west coast) in the United States from July to August 1990 and from December 1990 to January 1991. The entries in Table 2 were derived by totalling the number of varanids for sale on the stores' mailing lists during the months listed. (For this survey, I chose the summer months, a popular time to purchase such exotic pets and the winter holiday months when people shower their friends and family with gifts, reptiles included.)

V. e. exanthematicus

	June-July 90	Dec 90 - Jan 91	Total
V. exanth.	62	97	159
V. griseus	-	-	0
V. niloticus	38	46	84
V. albigularis	2	5	3 (-2)*

It is interesting to note that the total for only seven stores during this period is greater than the total reported exports listed in Table 1 from 1975 to 1977.

Why do so many African countries permit such massive exports of both live animals and skins? In all too few African countries, conservation officers and governments have realized that if this pet trade market is not kept under control, natural resources such as monitor lizards will be in danger of overexploitation. Other countries in Africa regard these varanids as "pests", or "small game", and actively encourage hunting of them, *provided* you have the required hunting license, or collecting permit. This system brings in much needed revenue to these governments, though does little to protect the animal populations.

V. griseus caspius

In Togo, *V. exanthematicus* and *V. niloticus* are classified as pest species under the ordinance on Wildlife Protection and Hunting, 16 January 1968. An enabling decree, dated 4 June 1980, sets out license fees for hunting and commercial capture, but there is no bag limit for these species (Luxmore, 1988). *V. griseus* and *V. albigularis* are not indigenous to Togo.

In Ghana, Wildlife Conservation Regulations, 4 March 1971, define *Varanus niloticus* as totally protected and *V. exanthematicus* as partially protected, for which hunting is permitted under license during the open season (Luxmore, 1988). *V. griseus* and *V. albigularis* are not indigenous to Ghana.

In Benin, under the decree concerning hunting and capturing licenses, bag limits and professional hunters, 1 February 1980, Varanidae are designated as small game species. They may only be hunted by the holders of traditional hunting rights or under hunting permits (Luxmore, 1988). *V. griseus* and *V. albigularis* are not indigenous to Benin.

Conservation efforts in Africa are strict for the desert monitor (*V. griseus*) and the amount of live trade appears to be minimal (Luxmore, 1988). The primary sources for the skin trade of these species and its subspecies comes from Pakistan and India, where there is less protection than in Africa.

Within the country of Mali, restriction on export of *V. griseus* is complete, and a ban on hunting this species is also in effect (Luxmore, 1988).

V. albigularis

In Mauritania, capture, possession, sale or export of live wild animals requires a commercial capture permit. The sale of *V. griseus* meat is prohibited. Since 1972, Niger has prohibited the hunting of Varanidae for utilitarian purposes. *V. albigularis* is not indigenous to Mauritania or Niger. *V. exanthematicus* is not known in Niger (Luxmore, 1988).

Varanus albigularis has been completely protected in the Republic of South Africa. However, the export of captive born individuals to the United States and elsewhere is permitted (Marius, pers. comm.). In South Africa, some people regard this species as sacred and as a sign of bringing water, so to engage in its export is considered taboo. On the other hand, there are those who consider white-throat monitors a delicacy and will readily kill and eat any they come across.

In Zimbabwe, the Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management is now permitting the export of reptiles bred in captivity in order to bring in some foreign currency (Broadley, pers. comm.). This includes the white-throat, savannah, and Nile monitors. *V. griseus* is not indigenous to Zimbabwe.

In Tanzania, there are approximately 100 to 150 savannah and white-throat monitors exported per year. *V. griseus* is not indigenous to Tanzania. The laws under the Wildlife Conservation Act, 30 June 1974, require the purchase of permits for both the capture and hunting of live animals (Luxmore, 1988). The fees for the capture and hunting permits are intended to help regulate who can walk through the bush and grab whatever he/she desires without the risk of being caught by the conservation officers. The fees also add much needed revenue to the departments of parks and wildlife, conservation, tourism, etc. This additional revenue is necessary if conservation efforts of indigenous species are to continue.

V. niloticus

The Chief Game Warden in Uganda informs me that his department is grossly under-staffed and barely functional due to a low budget. He further notes that in neighboring countries the game departments are functioning on more stable budgets, Tanzania being one such example (Otim, pers. comm.).

How a skinny, often dehydrated, savannah, Nile, white-throat, or desert monitor makes its way to your doorstep is truly a miracle. These animals must endure collection, transportation in a bag/box/crate some 3000 miles or more, temperature changes, and eventual arrival in a pet shop whose proprietor may or may not responsibly care for the animals received. Then, there is at least one more voyage the animal must endure to reach its new American home. (Upon delivery of a savannah monitor lizard from a Florida retailer, I removed 23 ticks from its skin prior to placing it within its new residence. The poor animal went right to the water dish where it drank for several minutes.)

Though the number of African varanids that are exported to the United States is staggering, the number of varanids that survive and do thrive is pathetic. I cast blame on no one, but only say that each and every of us who chooses to take these

unique animals into our homes must accept the responsibility of properly caring for them.

The information presented in this paper has been gathered by the author in his quest for knowledge of the savannah and white-throat monitors. He has been engaged in a comprehensive 1-1/2 year study in an endeavor to collect, collate, and publish an "owners manual" of these two species for scholars, pet-owners, pet-shops and interested persons alike. Anyone interested in this project, whether they wish to contribute or inquire, should contact: Mark Bayless, 1406 Holly St., Berkeley, CA 94703, USA.

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Photographic Credits

V. albigularis courtesy of East Bay Vivarium and special appreciation to Wayne Liersch, an employee of EBV.

V. e. exanthematicus in author's collection.

V. griseus caspius courtesy of Dr. Dmitryi Grechanichenko, of the Alma-Ata Zoo in the Soviet Union.

V. niloticus courtesy of Greg Naclerio, Editor of VaraNews

Publications

This is where books, magazines, newsletter articles, etc. of interest to Varanix members will be discussed. Many people are looking for a source of good literature about varanids. If you know of any good publications, send in the title, author, publisher and publication date/issue. Comments on its focus and usefullness are most welcome.

Giant Lizards

If you enjoyed the recent Tropical Fish Hobbyist magazine articles on monitors by Robert Sprackland (A Myriad of Monitors, January 1991 and The Emerald Monitor Lizard, *V. prasinus*, April 1991) you might be interested in a book about varanids by the same author. "Giant Lizards" is reportedly in the final production stages, due out sometime in August. It will be in the 200-page range and include many new photographs.

If you are looking forward to getting a copy, you might write to the publisher and let them know you anxiously await its release. This type of action motivates publishers to at least attempt making the publication due date. Write to: TFH, One TFH Plaza, Neptune City NJ 07753.

I am contacting TFH about a discounted group purchase for Varanix members... more on this next time.

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