HUSBANDRY NOTES

VARANUS PANOPTES HORNI (Argus monitor) SEXUAL MATURITY

The ages at which varanid lizards reach sexual maturity in captivity remain poorly documented. Here, I report on sexual maturation in a young pair of *Varanus panoptes horni* born and raised in captivity.

A group of four (1.3) *V. panoptes horni* hatched in captivity between 6 and 22 January 2008 (Paden, 2008) were raised together in an enclosure measuring 244 x 122 x 213 cm (l x w x h). A 76 cm deep sand substrate was offered for burrowing, and driftwood and sculpted rockwork provided climbing space. Two separate basking areas were provided, each consisting of two 45 watt halogen outdoor flood lights. Three of the lights were maintained on a 12:12 photoperiod, whereas the fourth was kept on permanently. From the time of hatching, the group was primarily fed mice daily, with the "San Diego Zoo diet" (Lemm et al., 2004) and insects making up less than 5% of their diet. The group coexisted with few territorial disputes. All three females have demonstrated similar growth rates and are comparable in size; the male is considerably larger than the females and has demonstrated a noticeably faster growth rate.

Copulation was first observed between the male and one of the females on 25 July 2008. Both individuals were between 186 and 202 days old at this time. After a gestation period of ca. 20-23 days, a clutch of six eggs was laid on 21 July 2008 near the base of a buried log at a depth of ca. 45 cm and at a temperature of 29.3 °C. Egg measurements were not recorded. At the time of oviposition, the female measured just 29.8 cm in snout to vent length (SVL) whereas the male measured ca. 5-8 cm longer in SVL. All eggs appeared to be fertile, however one egg was discarded after two weeks of incubation. At the time of this writing, the eggs have been incubating for three months.

Figure 1. Adult male (left) and female (right) *Varanus panoptes horni*.

Figure 2. *Varanus panoptes horni* eggs.

Literature Cited

Lemm, J.M., M.S. Edwards, T.D. Grant and A.C. Alberts. 2004. Comparison of growth and nutritional status of juvenile Komodo monitors (*Varanus komodoensis*) maintained on rodent or poultry-based diets. Zoo Biology 23: 239-252.

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