
NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

VARANUS RUDICOLLIS (Rough-necked monitor) OCCURRENCE

Little is known about the natural history and geographic distribution of *Varanus rudicollis*. Here, I report on observations of *V. rudicollis* made while traveling in southwestern Borneo.

On 17 November 2006, while traveling in a 10 m long wooden boat known locally as a klotok on a small tributary of the Sungai Sekonyer River in Tunjung Putting National Park, outside of Pangkalanbun, Central Kalimantan (ca. -2.757087° S ; 111.946825° E), several *V. rudicollis* were seen swimming along the banks (Figure 1). The immediate area, a swamp forest, was densely vegetated, and the river was lined with dense foliage and smaller trees (Figure 2).

Around 12 independent observations of *V. rudicollis* were made over the course of two four-hour trips. All sightings occurred during mid-morning to early afternoon. There was significant cloud cover the entire trip. All individuals were seen swimming, noticeable by the V-shaped wake created by their movements as they swam towards vegetation lining the banks. The monitors were taking shelter in the heavy vegetation along the banks of the river, but only deep enough to where they were out of reach and difficult to see as we passed. Several sightings involved more than one individual. Sometimes groups of two to three individuals were seen within 5 m of one another, swimming across the river in front of our boat, however most sightings were of single individuals. *Varanus rudicollis* was only seen in areas where vegetation was dense along the river. There is considerable boat traffic on the river, so the monitors may be somewhat accustomed to river traffic.



Figure 1. Juvenile *Varanus rudicollis* swimming.



Figure 2. Riverbank vegetation used by *V. rudicollis*.

Observed individuals appeared to have been between 45 and 75 cm in total length. Each individual was light gray in background coloration with yellowish crossbands. Although *V. salvator* occurs in aquatic habitats throughout Borneo, every monitor seen within sufficient viewing distance (first noticeable from ca. 30 m, clearly visible from 10 m, and as close as 2 m) appeared to have the same body coloration and markings as the individual photographed, leading me to believe that they were all the same species. No large monitors over 75 cm, such as *V. salvator*, were seen along the river.

MIKE SIMPSON
Davis, CA, USA
michaelsimpson@yahoo.com