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# TRANSLATIONS

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## A Further New Monitor Species of the *Varanus prasinus* Complex from Misol Island, Indonesia

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**Abstract-** From Misol island, offshore to the south-west of the Vogelkop-peninsula, a new monitor species of the *Varanus prasinus* complex is described as *V. reisingeri* sp. n. The new species is distinguished from *V. prasinus* by its black ground color with a yellow pattern. It is distinguished from *V. macraei*, which occurs on Batanta, by its yellow dorsal pattern (*V. macraei* has a blue dorsal pattern). The dorsal coloration consists of yellow spots, which partially have black ocelli, arranged in 16 cross-rows. The ventral coloration is a bright yellow.

### Introduction

In recent years, several new species of the subgenus *Euprepiosaurus* have been discovered and newly described to science. These are mostly species of the *Varanus indicus*-complex (*V. melinus* Böhme and Ziegler, 1997, *V. yuwonoi* Harvey and Baker, 1998, *V. caerulivirens* Ziegler *et al.*, 1999, *V. cerambonensis* Philipp *et al.* 1999, *V. juxtindicus* Böhme *et al.*, 2002).

Additionally, two new species of the *V. prasinus*-complex have been described recently (*V. macraei* Böhme and Jacobs, 2001 and *V. boehmei* Jacobs, 2003). These newly described species occur, as the others with the exception of *V. keithhornei*, on the islands surrounding New Guinea. This area probably holds more surprises regarding new species. A further two species of the *V. prasinus*-complex have been described: *V. keithhornei*

(Wells and Wellington, 1985) from a rainforest region on the Cape York peninsula in Australia, and *V. telenestes* (Sprackland, 1991) from Rossel island, to the southeast of New Guinea. These species all have a black base-color.

The species described in this article was brought to our attention by M. Reisinger, who saw these animals at a dealer's shop during his last stay on Irian Jaya (Dec. 2004). He noted that this had to be a new taxon. While there, he researched the origin of the animals in question. From the dealer, he learned that these specimens were collected on Misol Island, southwest of the Vogelkop-peninsula.

We hereby describe the new monitor species as: *Varanus reisingeri* sp. n.

**Holotype**

SMF 83679, adult male, Misol Island, Indonesia, collected by native collectors, January 2005.

**Description**

Habitus slim. Total length 760 mm, SVL 280 mm, TL 480 mm, front leg length 72 mm, upper arm length 36 mm, lower arm length 36 mm; length of the fourth toe 37 mm; hind leg length 68 mm, thigh length 35 mm, lower leg length 33 mm; length of the fourth toe 35 mm. Shape of the head elongated, about twice as long as wide; Canthus rostralis slightly raised in the preocular region. Nasal region slightly raised, nostril oval, located closer to the tip of the snout than to the eye (1:1.36). Six scales between the eye and the nostril. Scaling of the upper side of the head is irregular, 5 interoculars present, irregular size (Fig. 5). Parietal eye clearly visible. Nuchal scales round, elongated towards the body, weakly keeled. Ventral side with very narrow, elongated, slightly keeled scales, 82 rows from the gular fold to the base of the hind legs; 87 rows around the mid-body, not forming complete rings. Also on the ventral side, the rows are not always continuous. Front legs (72 mm) longer than the hind legs (68 mm). Ventral side of the toes with enlarged black scales. Claws large, strongly curved and pointed.

The tail is round in cross section and prehensile. Scales are arranged in rings, dorsal caudal scales slightly keeled. The tail is about 1.7 times longer than the SVL. The holotype has a slightly distorted tail, which was probably caused by an injury. Therefore it is possible that the tail of "healthy" animals are relatively longer (see prospective paratypes). Base coloration is glossy black. Clusters of yellow spots on the nape and back form clear bands. Some spots show a black center. Banding on the nape is chevron-shaped, on the rest of the body the spots are arranged in 16 distinct rows. The scales are slightly keeled.

The scales on the head are yellow, the interstitial skin is black; tip of the snout is light yellow. The lower jaw is also light yellow. A double row of black scales, with a central row of small yellow scales which have a black center, starts in front of the eye and stretches along the head, until over the ear; the throat is bright yellow, without visible mottling.

The ventral coloration of the type specimen is bright yellow, only the interstitial skin is black. The scales on the legs are yellow with a black interstitial skin, more irregular on the front legs due to some of the scales being black.

The ventral side of the tail is bright yellow, the scales here are also slightly keeled.

**Prospective Paratypes**

Topotypics, two specimens which are still alive. When deceased, they will be deposited in the Senckenberg Museum.

**Specimen 1.**

Subadult male, origin: Misol Island, Indonesia, collected by native collectors, January 2005. Habitus, coloration and patterning is identical to the holotype. Because of this, only the differences are listed. Total length 673 mm, snout-vent length 248 mm, tail length 425 mm; front leg length 60 mm, upper arm length 28 mm, lower arm 32 mm; length of the fourth toe 25 mm; rear leg length 65 mm, thigh length 32 mm, lower leg length 33 mm; Length of the fourth toe 32 mm. Nostril oval, located closer to the snout than to the eye (1:1.22). Five scales between the eye and the nostril. 5 scales between the eyes across the top of the head. Parietal eye visible. Eighty two rows of scales from the gular fold to the base of the rear leg, 88 scales around the mid body; not arranged in consistent rings. The front legs (60 mm) shorter than the rear legs (65 mm). The tail is approximately 1.7 times as long as the snout-vent length.

**Specimen 2.**

Subadult female, origin: Misol Island, Indonesia, collected by native collectors, January 2005. Habitus, coloration and patterning is identical to the Holotypus. Only the differences are listed. Total length 630 mm, snout-vent length 220 mm, tail length 410 mm; front leg length 53 mm, upper arm length 26 mm, lower arm length 27 mm; Length of the fourth toe 23 mm; rear leg length 58 mm, thigh length 28 mm, lower leg length 30 mm; Length of the fourth toe 27 mm. Nostril oval, located closer to the snout than to the eye (1:1.06). Five scales between the eye and the nostril. Five scales between the eyes across the top of the head. Parietal eye visible. Eighty seven rows of scales from the gular fold to the root of the rear legs; 88 scales around the mid body, not arranged in consistent rings. The front legs (53 mm) are shorter than the rear legs (58 mm). The tail is approximately 1.86 times as long as the snout-vent length.

### Diagnosis

The *V. prasinus* complex is obviously organized around its center, New Guinea. All islands from which members of this closely related group have been described are located on the continental shelf which connects New Guinea with Australia, or is separated from it by a strait (Jobi Island, D'Entrecasteaux archipelago, Rossel Island). Heatwole (1987) noted that the sea level 14,000 years ago was about 120 m lower than today. Through the rise in sea level following the last ice age, the peripheral populations became isolated, and underwent independent development. The population of the D'Entrecasteaux archipelago, or Rossel Island, can be explained by drifting (e.g., drift wood).

The new species from Misol clearly belongs to the *V. prasinus* complex, as it shows the typical characteristics of this group (slender habitus, prehensile tail). The species is distinguished from all other the other members of the *V. prasinus* complex by its coloration (*V. prasinus* and *V. kordensis* have a green ground color, *V. reisingeri* has a black ground color, with extensive yellow markings). From the other members of the *V. prasinus* complex which show a black ground color (*V. boehmei*, *V. p. beccarii*, *V. p. bogerti*, *V. keithhornei*, *V. macraei*, *V. telenesetes*), it is distinguished by its distinct markings on the back. These markings, in contrast to the blue markings of *V. macraei*, consist of yellow blotches, which are arranged in transverse rows. The new species

is also distinguished from *V. boehmei* by its markings (*V. boehmei* has indistinct reddish to yellowish banding, while *V. reisingeri* has bright yellow blotches and ocelli on its back). It is distinguished from *V. p. beccarii* by its larger number of ventral scales (74 in *V. p. beccarii* vs. 82 in *V. reisingeri*). *Varanus telenesetes* on the other hand, has more rows of scales around the mid body (100 vs. 87 in *V. reisingeri*). Geographic separation should be enough to distinguish it from *V. p. bogerti*. Distinguishing it from *V. keithhornei*, from the Australian Cape York Peninsula, is possible by differences in ventral markings (white-grey in *V. keithhornei* vs. yellow in *V. reisingeri*) and the geographic separation of these two species.

### Etymology

We name this new species after Manfred Reisinger (Landshut, Germany), who gathered information about its origin, and supplied important information for the description. As the German common name, we suggest Reisinger's Baumwaran (= Reisinger's tree monitor).

### Distribution

The distribution of this monitor species seems to be limited to Misol Island, Irian Jaya, according to the information from local collectors in Sorong. Further enquiries and additional information about its occurrence and natural history is lacking.