



Common name: Water dragons

Scientific name

Gippsland - *Physignathus lesueurii*

Eastern - *Physignathus lesueurii lesueurii*

Biology and behaviour

In the wild, water dragons live wooded streams and rocky littoral. Water dragons are semi aquatic, semi arboreal sun loving species. This species is active but usually timid. They may attempt to flee when disturbed. Water dragons can sometimes be intolerant to other animals, so it's recommended to keep either a pair (male and female) or a maximum of one male and two females, together in a single vivarium.

Requirements

You will require a basic wildlife licence issued by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

Size and Longevity

Most adults usually reach 16 inches in length – the tail counting for half to two-thirds of the length - but some can reach up to a meter in length. They can live up to 15 years.

Housing, temperature and lighting

Adults can be kept in a minimum 120cm x 60cm x 60cm terrarium. Cage decorations should include branches for climbing and a clean water area big enough for them to completely submerge themselves. Temperatures should be 30°C at the hot end and 26°C at the cool end. A 5.0 reptile UV globe should be provided and on for about 8 hours per day as this helps with the absorption of calcium and the formation of bone structure. One to two water dragons can be kept in a 5 1/2-foot by 3-foot by 3-foot vivarium, but larger enclosures permit landscaping, a bigger water pool and overall better aesthetics of the setup. The vivarium should be high enough to install branches so the lizard can bask under a heat lamp or spotlight during the day. These lizards are semi-aquatic and need a large water area in their enclosure, covering preferably at least a third of the floor. The water should be maintained at 25°C. In most cases general vivarium heating will be sufficient, but an aquarium heater or a heat mat placed under the water container, can be used. The pool of water also will provide high humidity, which is essential for these lizards.

For hygienic reasons, line the floor with newspaper, granulated bark, or artificial turf.

Replace the floor covering daily or weekly, depending on contamination. In addition to the branches, provide boxes, pieces of bark or hollow tree parts for hideouts.

Feeding

Water dragons should be feed an assortment of insects such as crickets, moths, cockroaches and mealworms (only for adults), which should be supplemented with calcium and vitamin powder occasionally. Fruits and vegetables should also be supplied although no citrus fruits should be given to them. They should be feed ever 2 to 3 days fresh water should be supplied everyday.

Handling

Most individuals will not enjoy being handled but some with time will adjust to handling. They can scratch and thrash around when being handled.