

Goannas - our largest lizards

by Ed Parker

Some native animals, even when they still exist in remnant urban bushland, are not readily observed. Native animals are often shy, sometimes nocturnal, or small in size or in population, all of which present challenges for catching sight of our fauna friends.

In years gone by, in these suburbs, some of the larger native animals would venture into or inhabit gardens. In the early 1990's, for example, it was not uncommon for goannas to frequent some gardens in Westlake as they strayed from neighbouring bushland. But such behaviour sometimes resulted in death by dog attack.

As the diversity of fauna is lost, it is generally the larger animals which are lost first. Goannas, as the largest of the lizards, are now more rare in Centenary's bushland. In fact, at the Pullen Reach bushland along the Brisbane River, the last known sighting of a goanna was in the early 1990's.

That changed early this year when the Green Corps project team was working on developing the Coucal Trail path and bridges from Barcoorah Street to Callabonna Street. As regulars there for six months the Green Corps team had the opportunity to observe the native fauna more consistently than most of us can.

On one occasion they caught a rare glimpse of one of these large lizards, and were fortunate enough to have a camera to hand to capture it on film. Nature Watch is able to publish a picture from this sighting, courtesy of the Green Corps supervisor.

The specimen was identified as the larger of the two goanna species that frequent the Brisbane area. Called the Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*), this goanna is grey or black with narrow pale bands and transverse rows of pale spots. It grows up to about one-and-a-half metres in length, from head to tail.

The Lace Monitor is differentiated from its smaller cousin, Gould's Goanna or Sand Goanna, by the latter's more sandy colour.

Nature Watch would be interested to hear from readers of their observations of uncommon or unusual native animals in our local bushlands. Keeping a notebook or diary for such observations is a good technique and useful for record and future comparison.



Lace Monitor, at Pullen Reach, Westlake
Photo by Green Corps team, courtesy Brendan Taylor,
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