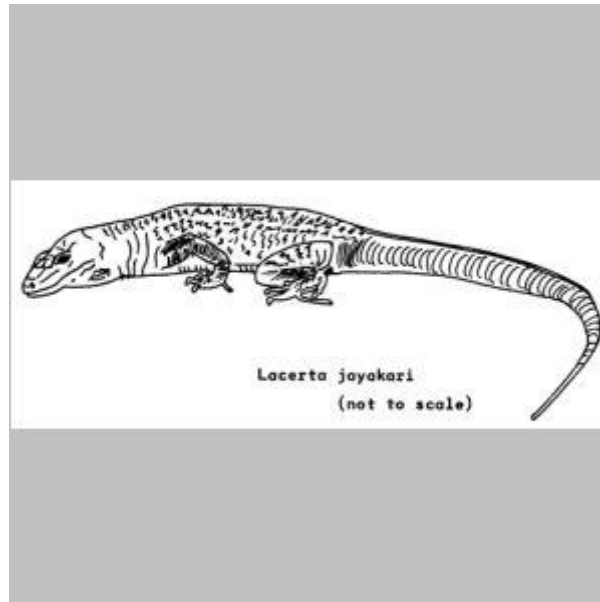


Two Lizards of the UAE

by J.N.B. Brown

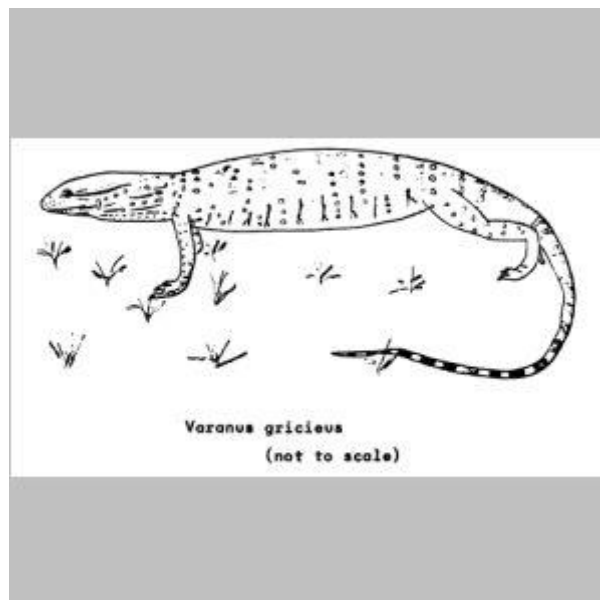
Jayakar's Lacertid (*Lacerta jayakari*)



This is a long, slender lizard with an estimated maximum length of 35 cm. The color is variable but usually fawn with light brown markings. It keeps its belly close to the ground and is rarely seen standing at full stretch. Food consists partly of vegetation and partly of animal food, including smaller lizards and insects.

This species is generally found in mountainous areas, on rocky ledges and overhangs and on dry stonewalls adjacent to cultivated areas. One was observed on the ledge of a five-meter-deep well in the Wadi Uyaynat, and in Wadi Khabb Shamsi another was recorded in the branches of a small tree at least three meters above the ground. In the Buraimi region, the species has been seen around the villages of Al Khudayrah, Dhahir and Masah. Near Dibba, it has been recorded in various rocky oases and plantations and occasionally in similar localities around Hatta.

Desert Monitor (*Varanus gricieu*) - Arabic 'wirral'



This is a very long lizard in adulthood, measuring almost one meter from snout to the tip of the tail. Color varies with habitat but is usually pale yellow-gray with darker transverse lines. In dune habitats, it may appear a light sandy color. The tail is ridged along the top with light, dark and in the breeding season, orange segments. The tail is longer than the rest of the body. Neck and body appear long and slender, though the body is actually shaped like an oval plate.

In defense, it uses its tail like a whip, lowering its head, and expelling air with a loud hissing sound. It does not attack with its jaws unless caught. Its long, sharp teeth can inflict deep lacerations that may become infected due to its diet of carrion. In itself, the creature is not poisonous.

The Desert Monitor is normally found on gravel plains and hard-packed sandy areas. Using its very strong claws, it burrows into the ground making a flattish domed hole, just large enough to enter. So far in the UAE it has been recorded from the Schwaib area (two specimens - one alive and one run over). It is also reported from Al Ain and examples can be seen in the zoo there.

It lives on any sort of carrion, small mammals, birds, lizards and probably some vegetation. It is said to be the archenemy of the spiny-tailed agamid or 'dhub', *Uromastix microlepis*. (See Bulletin 16)

References:

'The Journal of Oman Studies', Special Report 1975

The Reptiles and Amphibians from the Mountains of Northern Oman, by E.N.Arnold and M.D.Gallagher. (A copy is held in the ENHG Library in the Workroom).