

# Ornate Nile Monitor

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**Common Name:** Monitor – Ornate Nile

**Other Common Names:** none

**Scientific Name:** *Varanus Niloticus Ornatus*

**Group:** Monitors

**Origin or Range:** Northern Africa

**Size:** 5-6 feet total length,  
30 inches snout-vent

**Average Lifespan:** 15-20 years

**Compatibility:** Aggressive  
(as compared to other monitors)

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## Animal Description:

The Ornate Nile Monitor is a large, powerful monitor, generally yellow in color with a black overlay across the back, allowing the yellow to show through in rows of spots. The rows of spots turn into banding on the tail. The throat is usually yellow, and the ventral side a paler yellow with narrow rows of black spots. This is one of the larger varanids, and is fairly intelligent. Nile monitors in general are known for aggressive behavior when feeling threatened, and will readily bite. The ornate Nile is not an exception to this, but appears to be more intelligent than the regular Nile monitors, and can become handleable with a large amount of effort. Their teeth are sharp and will make deep cuts, and they will readily lash with the strong tail. These monitors are for experienced monitor keepers ONLY, and should not be kept around small children, as the potential for injury is always present.

The Ornate Nile Monitor may be distinguished from the regular Nile Monitor by the coloration and the number of bands of spots across the back. Ornates will have five – six bands across the back; regular Niles will have six or more. The tongue of an Ornate Nile Monitor is pink; the tongue of the regular Nile Monitor is blue. Fully adult Ornate Nile Monitors have larger heads than regular Nile Monitors, and are somewhat more intelligent.

Ornate Nile Monitors range from the Nile River region in the east of Africa, westward to the coast, including the Sahara Desert. They are most usually found near bodies of water, and a large part of their diet is made up of crustaceans in the wild. They are pedestrian in their diet, and will eat pretty much anything they can catch. They are used to high daytime temperatures, and enjoy basking in hotter temperatures. When threatened, Ornate Nile Monitors prefer to run, but will bite, scratch, and tail whip if no escape route is present, as is

usually the situation in captivity. They have sharp teeth, and can inflict a nasty bite that will become infected. The claws are sharp, and will readily be used in defense, in addition to the tail and their sharp teeth. The claws will leave deep scratches that tend to become infected. Handling an Ornate Nile Monitor must be done with care, and should be done almost daily. Rough or intermittent handling will only make the animal more inclined to fight. When small, they see humans as large predators, but with gentle handling through the younger years, may eventually learn to trust their human companions, usually when they reach about three feet total length. They are curious and fairly intelligent; because of this, they will learn to recognize individual humans, and react accordingly.

The Ornate Nile Monitor is one of the larger monitors. The total length for an adult male can reach up to six feet, approximately 60% of which is the tail. The average is close to five feet; females tend to be a bit smaller.

Hatchlings tend to have brighter colors than adults, with a much brighter yellow. They prefer to flee when threatened, but will readily bite and tail-whip if they are cornered.

These animals are still imported from the wild, but captive bred specimens are also available. Captive bred specimens are preferable, as they will be healthier and have more of a tendency to become handleable.

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**Specific Care Information:****Relative Care Ease:** Average

Ornate Nile Monitors should be kept at a temperature of around 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit, with a basking area of between 90 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. They should also be provided with full spectrum fluorescent lighting that provides twelve hours of light a day. At night, the temperature should be around 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Ornate Nile Monitors should be given full-spectrum/UV light, 12-14 hours per day.

The enclosure for an Ornate Nile Monitor should be at least 4 feet high, 8 feet long and 4 feet deep for one lizard. The larger the enclosure, the more content the animal. Climbing areas should be provided, as these animals like to utilize multiple levels. Hiding areas and/or a hide box are essential. Substrate may be papers, Care Fresh, cypress mulch, or dirt. Paper is easiest to change out when soiled, but don't use old newspapers, or your animal will become black from the newsprint. A pool or water bowl large enough for soaking is essential, and they will spend a large amount of time in the water. They will most likely defecate in the water, so the pool must be cleaned regularly and well.

The Ornate Nile Monitor's diet should be varied. They will readily feed on large arthropods, eggs, small lizards, fish, birds, and rodents. Live rodents should be avoided, as the animal will not eat when it isn't hungry, and rodents can harm the animal. They can be fed canned monitor diet occasionally, but not often. Canned cat and dog food should be avoided, as they are too fatty and will make the animal obese. Raw eggs are messy for the lizard's environment and the lizard and can lead to salmonella problems; hard-boiled eggs are better for this reason.

Regular exercise is essential for the Ornate Nile Monitor. Letting them out of the cage for a period each day will allow them to satisfy their curiosity about their surroundings, and get the exercise they need. They can be trained to accept a harness and leash, but will not "walk" like a dog. They lead, you follow.