

# Eastern Water Dragon

## *Physignathus lesuerii lesuerii*

### What do they look like?

The Eastern Water Dragon grows to around 80 to 90 cm in length, much of which is its tail. The colour consists of shades of grey or brown with a series of black bands on the back and tail and a black stripe on the side of the head behind the eye. The underside is creamy-white, although males may have a vivid red on some or most of the belly and chest.



There are enlarged scales forming a crest down the middle of the head, back and tail. The legs are relatively long and powerful and the strong tail is flattened on the sides to assist with swimming.

### Where do they live?

The eastern water dragon inhabits the coastal water courses of eastern Australia from northern Queensland to Gippsland in eastern Victoria. It is a good tree climber and likes to laze on branches overhanging the water. If disturbed, it will drop into the water and swim to the bottom to wait for the danger to pass, staying under for up to 30 minutes if necessary.

### What do they eat?

Their diet mainly comprises of small reptiles, worms, frogs, insects, vegetation, fruit, small mammals and molluscs.

### Breeding and Lifecycle

Males defend a territory and a harem of females, carrying out an impressive series of head bobs and arm waves to discourage other intruding males. The females lay around a dozen eggs in an excavated hole in sandy soil above the floodline. These will hatch in approximately three months. The young are miniature replicas of the adults and are able to fend for themselves as soon as they hatch.

### Did you know?

Male water dragons will sometimes fight each other for territories. Such battles can become quite severe with the two combatants standing on their hind legs in an attempt to push the other over on to its back.

