

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS WATER DRAGONS



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Alive with discovery



A favourite amongst visitors to the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Eastern and Gippsland Water Dragons delight both young and old with their impressive looks and entertaining antics.

Where can I find them?

The Water Dragons can be found in three locations within the Gardens. They like to welcome visitors to the Gardens along the Joseph Banks Walk between the Visitors Centre and the cafe. They love to sun themselves around the Rock Garden and Waterfall and they also frequent the ponds near the Education Lawn, right down to the Tasmanian Gardens. Water Dragons are protected in Australia and we encourage you to enjoy them in their natural habitat. Do not attempt to approach, touch or feed them as they have sharp claws and teeth.

What do they look like?

Water Dragons in Australia can grow up to 1 metre. Their tail forms 2/3 of their length and is almost all muscle. The Water Dragon's upper body is a grey-green with cream and black transverse bands on the body and tail. Underneath the body is creamy brown-grey. They have loose folds of skin under the jaw, giving them an almost Bearded Dragon appearance.

Subspecies differences

The Eastern Water Dragon has a dark stripe from ear to eye, that the Gippsland Water Dragon lacks. The Eastern Water Dragon male has a red flush on its chest and darker bands. The Gippsland Water Dragon male has an olive-grey chest and is distinguished with a colourful throat that is blotched or striped with various colours; orange, blue and yellow.

Diet

Water Dragons are omnivorous, eating both plants and animals. They generally feed on insects, frogs, yabbies, aquatic organisms, fruits, berries and flowers. They can even eat under water!

Behaviour

- Water Dragons spend a lot of time perching in trees alongside creeks and rivers
- At any sign of danger they will dive into the water and either remain underwater or swim away
- Water Dragons have been known to stay underwater for up to 90 minutes
- They can run on all four legs, but if they're in a hurry, they'll stand up and run on their hind legs
- They use their powerful back legs and sharp claws to help them climb trees and dig holes for over-wintering and nesting
- Water Dragons are usually active from spring to autumn
- The breeding season is during spring and summer when females lay clutches of between 6-18 eggs
- Water Dragons communicate through a variety of behaviours including head-bobbing, saluting, puffing out their throats, opening their mouths wide and even licking things. The best way to observe these behaviours is to remain still, quiet and patient

