

## Fun facts

- There are hundreds of water dragons in the Gardens, 70% of which are female.
- Water dragons have inhabited Australia for 20 million years.
- Similar to skinks and geckos, water dragons can drop or lose their tail if threatened or attacked and can regrow it.
- Water dragons moult to rid themselves of their old, dead skin.
- Water dragons can lift themselves up on their back legs and run short distances if threatened.
- They can hold their breath under water for up to an hour to escape predators.
- Females can lay up to two clutches of 10–20 eggs each season, which are buried. The sex of each hatchling is determined by the temperature of the eggs during incubation.
- Water dragons can live up to 28 years in the wild and up to 40 years in captivity.
- If you see a male bobbing its head it is saying "move on, this is my territory!"



## Other reptiles in the Gardens

The Gardens is home to several different types of reptiles, including lizards and snakes.

### **Bearded Dragons** – *Pogona barbata*

Bearded Dragons get their name from their habit of puffing out spiny scales and the pouch below their throats when threatened, giving the appearance of a beard.

### **Blue-tongued Lizards** – *Tiliqua scincoides*

Blue-tongued Lizards are a common sight in eastern Australia, famous for their blue tongues.

### **Copper Tailed Skinks** – *Ctenotus taeniolatus*

Look out for these small lizards in sunny spots with protection nearby, they mainly eat insects and worms.

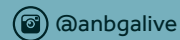
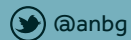
### **Eastern Brown Snakes** – *Pseudonaja textilis*

This variable species is widespread throughout eastern and central Australia. If you see one, stay still, back away slowly and tell a Ranger.

## Get in touch

Clunies Ross Street, Acton ACT 2601  
Open 8.30 am – 5.00 pm daily (closed Christmas Day)  
Visitor Centre open 9.30 am – 4.30 pm daily  
02 6250 9588 | [info@anbg.gov.au](mailto:info@anbg.gov.au)

[parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/](https://parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/)



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# Water Dragons



Alive with *diversity*



Australian National  
Botanic Gardens

A favourite amongst visitors, Gippsland Water Dragons (*Intellagama lesueurii howitti*) are semi-aquatic lizards in the Agamidae family (the dragons). Water dragons delight with their impressive looks and entertaining antics.



## Distinguishing features

Water dragons have scaly skin which forms a crest of spikes that continues down their body.

They can grow up to one metre long and can weigh over a kilogram.

Their tail, which is up to two thirds of their body length, allows them to swim efficiently and can even be used in self-defence.

There are two subspecies of water dragon in Australia, the Gippsland Water Dragon (*Intellagama lesueurii howitti*) and the Eastern Water Dragon (*Intellagama lesueurii lesueurii*). Only the Gippsland Water Dragon inhabits the Gardens.

The Gippsland males have a brightly coloured throat, whilst the Eastern Water Dragons have a dark band from eye to ear.



## Predator and prey

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 underwater.

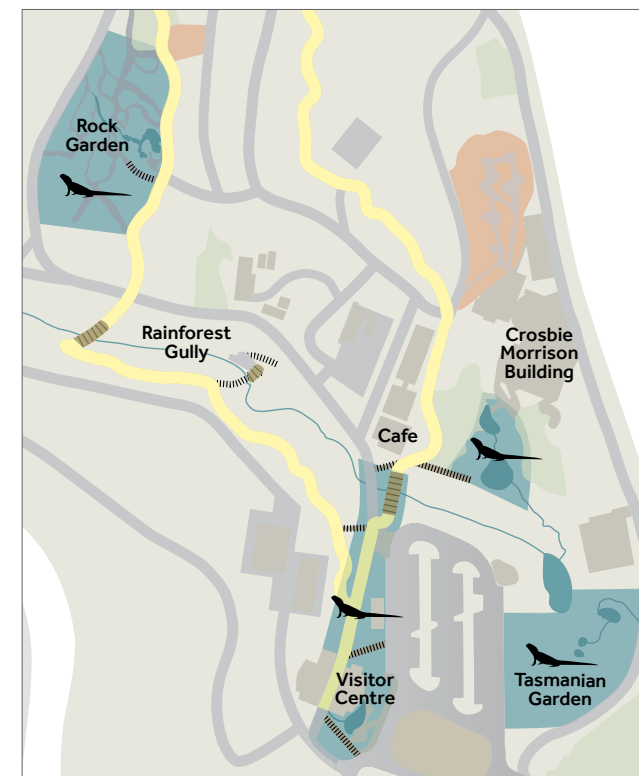
Water dragons can be preyed upon by various animals including snakes, birds, and feral animals such as cats and dogs.

## Find them in the Gardens

The water dragons are active from spring through to autumn each year. During the cooler months they enter a hibernation-like state called brumation.

The best places to see them are along the concourse between the Visitor Centre and the Café, at the Rock Garden around the waterfall, and in the Tasmanian Garden. However, you may find them throughout the Gardens.

Their powerful limbs and claws allow them to climb for protection, so you may find water dragons up in the trees and scaling rocks.



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.