

# Australian Water Dragons

By Mitchell, L 2019, *Australian Water Dragons*, Brisbane, Queensland: Lisa Mitchell.

Reviewer: Dr Sundara Mawalagedera  
(Pre-service teacher, Deakin University)



*Australian Water Dragons* is a non-fiction text written and published by Lisa Mitchell. The content is endorsed by Dr. James Baxter-Gilbert, an evolutionary ecologist whose research on Australian Water Dragons at Macquarie University examined their behaviour, morphology, and physical abilities between natural and urban populations. The book consists of 39 pages with more than three dozen vivid images of these fascinating and beautiful creatures, *Intellagama lesueurii*, as well as links for further reading, references and a glossary.

The book presents extensive detail on the morphology, ecology and conservation status of *I. lesueurii*. This detailed information, the images, and the clearly phrased scientific vocabulary make it an ideal educational resource for young learners, encompassing elements of the science and design & technology components of the Australian curriculum.

The description and illustrations, for instance, of how the water dragon's parietal eye, scaly skin, tail and limbs help it to survive could be used to support the development of science concepts such as the basic needs of animals, their external features, adaptation and life cycles.

The book's tables and specialised vocabulary could support the development of science communication and data presentation skills. The tables are used to clearly describe the morphology of the two water dragon subspecies, and to compare the males and females of each subspecies. They could also

be used to demonstrate to primary school students the versatility of such tools in comparing scientific observations, an essential feature in science inquiry.

Predator-prey relationships depicted in the book demonstrate the concept that organisms depend on each other to survive in the environment. The conservation status of the Australian water dragon, which is elaborated on in the text, could also initiate important classroom discussions on ecological balance. Learners can, for instance, be led to predict the damaging outcomes on the organisms and the environment if a link or links are broken in the feeding relationships.

On a personal note, I particularly liked the "lizard lounge" concept. Although the information is limited to a single paragraph, I believe it is sufficient for a primary teacher to formulate a good design brief for students, enabling them to construct a habitat for the Australian water dragon in school or at home.

An average student in the middle primary years may feel somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information presented in this book, while its typography, densely packed information and extensive scientific vocabulary may limit its usefulness for the younger cohort of its recommended audience of nine years of age and over. However, the book provides plentiful opportunities to introduce concepts and model inquiry, and to prompt design, making it an engaging and worthwhile resource for older primary children.