

Reptiles of **WAU CREEK** Palai, Sinek, Trausel na Pukpuk



Brown Cat Snake, *Boiga irregularis*. Colubridae.
Widely distributed in Papua New Guinea to elevations of 1,400m in diverse habitats from dense forest to disturbed agricultural lands. Nocturnal, it preys upon birds, lizards, bats and small rodents. Rear fanged and mildly venomous. Up to 2m.



Giant Blue-tongued Lizard, *Tiliqua gigas*. Scincidae.
Found in wet forests of New Guinea and associated islands. Diurnal, a general omnivore that feeds on fruits and flowers, arthropods and snails. Spectacular threat display, in which it opens its colourful mouth and flares a bright blue tongue. Live bearing. Harmless. Up to 35cm.



Water Dragon, *Hypsilurus magnus*. Agamidae.
Female shown. Widespread in New Guinea up to an elevation of 560m. Occupies the riparian zone and retreats to water when threatened. Sleeps on branches overhanging water at night, often in high densities. Diurnal, fast moving. Diet unknown. Oviparous. Harmless. Large, up to 80cm, mostly tail.



Crowned Forest Dragon, *Hypsilurus dilophus*. Agamidae.
Found in primary and secondary rainforests of New Guinea and associated islands to an elevation of 800m. Diurnal and arboreal, feeds on insects and small fruits. Oviparous. Harmless. Up to 45cm.



Green Tree Python, *Morelia viridis*. Pythonidae.
Found in rainforest of New Guinea, associated islands and northern Australia, to an elevation of 1,800m. Nocturnal and arboreal, feeds on small mammals. Ambush predator. Juveniles yellow (shown) or red, turning green at about 1yr of age. Oviparous. Harmless. Up to 2m.



Southern Snapping Turtle, *Elseya rhodini*. Chelidae.
Found in streams and tributaries that dissect the lowland rainforests of southern New Guinea and associated islands. General omnivore, feeding on insect larvae, crustaceans, fruits, occasionally carrion. Juveniles bright red below, fading with age. Oviparous. Shell length up to 25cm. Described from Wau Creek.



New Guinea Giant Softshell Turtle, *Pelochelys bibroni*. Trionychidae.
A large turtle found in the larger rivers and deltas of southern New Guinea. Secretive, solitary nester, poorly known. Comes to Wau Creek to nest. Ambush predator, primarily carnivorous, consuming fish, crabs, molluscs and occasionally vegetation. Can inflict a severe bite. Shell length up to 1m.



Amethyst Python, *Morelia amethystina*. Pythonidae.
New Guinea's largest snake, typically reaching lengths of 5m but as much as 8.5m. Widespread in New Guinea and northern Australia where it occupies rainforest and scrubland. Feeds on birds, bats, rats, possums and other small mammals; larger snakes feed on cuscus and wallabies. Non-venomous.



Pacific Blue Tailed Skink, *Emoia caeruleocauda*. Scincidae.
Widespread in the Pacific islands including New Guinea, where it is found in clearings in the forest. Often seen moving through low foliage. Diurnal, insectivorous. Oviparous, laying its one or more commonly two eggs in leaf litter on the forest floor. Up to 10cm.



Mueller's Forest Skink, *Sphenomorphus muelleri*. Scincidae.
Fossorial, living and moving through the leaf litter of the rainforest floor, presumably in search of invertebrates including earthworms. Nocturnal and crepuscular. Otherwise, habits poorly known. Size 40cm.



New Guinea Freshwater Crocodile, *Crocodylus novaeguinae*. Crocodylidae.
Occupies tributaries, freshwater swamps, marshes and lakes. Largely nocturnal when they feed on fish, turtles (including pig-nosed turtles) and other small animals. Oviparous, breed in the wet season. Dangerous when handled, but not a man-eater. Up to 3.5m.



Southern Bent-toed Gecko, *Cyrtodactylus novaeguinae*. Gekkonidae.
Occupies undisturbed rainforest below 550m elevation south of the central ranges of New Guinea. Nocturnal, insectivorous. Oviparous, laying 2 eggs per clutch. Harmless, but will bite. Up to 25cm.



Serrated Bent-toed Gecko, *Cyrtodactylus serratus*. Gekkonidae.
A highly arboreal species that occupies large trees in the rainforest, below 1,400m, in New Guinea south of the central ranges. Nocturnal, insectivorous. Oviparous, laying 2 eggs per clutch. Harmless. Up to 20cm.



Shrub Whiptail Skink, *Emoia longicauda*. Scincidae.
Found in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands south through the Torres Strait and eastern Cape York Peninsula in Australia. It is often found in clearings in the forest. Arboreal, diurnal, insectivorous. Oviparous. Up to 10cm.



Slatey-grey Snake, *Stegonotus parvus*. Colubridae.
Occupies forests of New Guinea and Torres Strait. Common around habitation. Nocturnal, feeds on small skinks. An able climber, it also forages on the ground. Non-venomous, but will bite aggressively if handled. Oviparous. Up to 80cm.



Tree Dtella, *Gehyra* sp. Gekkonidae.
The tree Dtelas are a diverse group of geckoes whose taxonomy is uncertain, and this species from Wau Creek may well be undescribed. Nocturnal, sheltering during the day behind tree bark and crevices. Insectivorous. Oviparous, laying two eggs. 12cm.



Pig-nosed Turtle, *Carettochelys insculpta*. Carettochelydidae.
A large turtle found in the larger rivers and deltas of southern New Guinea. Omnivorous, feeding on mangrove leaves, flowers and fruits of mangroves in riverine deltas; also crustaceans, molluscs and occasionally carrion. Comes to Wau Creek to nest. Shell length up to 55cm. Photo: Ricardo França Silva, Piku Team.



Mangrove Monitor, *Varanus indicus*. Varanidae.
A large lizard found in damp forests near lowland rivers, mangroves and permanent inland lakes and swamps. Carnivorous scavenger feeding on the eggs of reptiles and birds, molluscs, rodents, insects, crabs, smaller lizards, fish, and carrion. A principal raider of the nests of the pig-nosed turtle. Oviparous. Up to 1.5m in length.

Wau Creek is 1600 ha of rainforest and associated streams and sandbanks used by the pig-nosed turtle for nesting. It is set aside from logging in order to protect these nesting grounds and the astonishing biodiversity of the region more generally.

Accommodation has been constructed in support of visiting scientists.

Frank John, of the Rupahi Clan, Rumu Language Group, whose vision it was to establish the Wau Creek Protected Area, Kikori lowlands, Gulf Province.

