

## **Maritime Aquarium Mourns Death of 6-Year-Old, 7-Foot-Long 'Black Dragon' Lizard**

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The staff of the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is mourning the death of its Asian water monitor lizard, more commonly known as its black dragon.

The 7-foot lizard died overnight Monday.

“We’re always saddened by the death of any animal at the Aquarium, but the black dragon was appreciated as a very special creature by staff as well as by our guests,” said Barrett Christie, the Aquarium’s director of Animal Husbandry.

Cause of death is unknown. A necropsy will be performed at the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory at UConn. Although the 6-year-old lizard had shown a loss of appetite over the last several days and was receiving veterinary care, Christie said, the death was unexpected.

This lizard was rare because it had a melanistic gene that made the animal nearly solid black. Normally, Asian water monitor lizards are brownish-dark gray with small yellow dots underneath.

The black dragon had been a featured animal at The Maritime Aquarium, first in the “Dragons: Real or Myth” exhibit that opened in February 2015 and then moving up into the “Just Add Water” exhibit that debuted last August.

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The world's second-heaviest lizard (after Komodo dragons), Asian water monitor lizards are native to Southeast Asia. They're known to live to 10 to 15 years old in human care; less in the wild.