

Dear David,

It was so great hearing from you! Hope you solved the puzzling mystery of the parchment!

I have been reading wonderful things about the Gardens here in Australia! I even heard about how you have named one of your lakes after my favourite bird, the Kingfisher! I especially like the Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*). Did you know it gets its name from the white "collar" of feathers around its neck? I love how blue its feathers are, like the colour of the ocean on a hot summer's day. I can recognise its loud, distinctive call anywhere!

Here is a sketch I made of one I saw at the park the other day.

Do you have them at the Gardens too?

Your friend,
Anton

Colour me!



Letters to David: 'By the Water

Dear Anton,

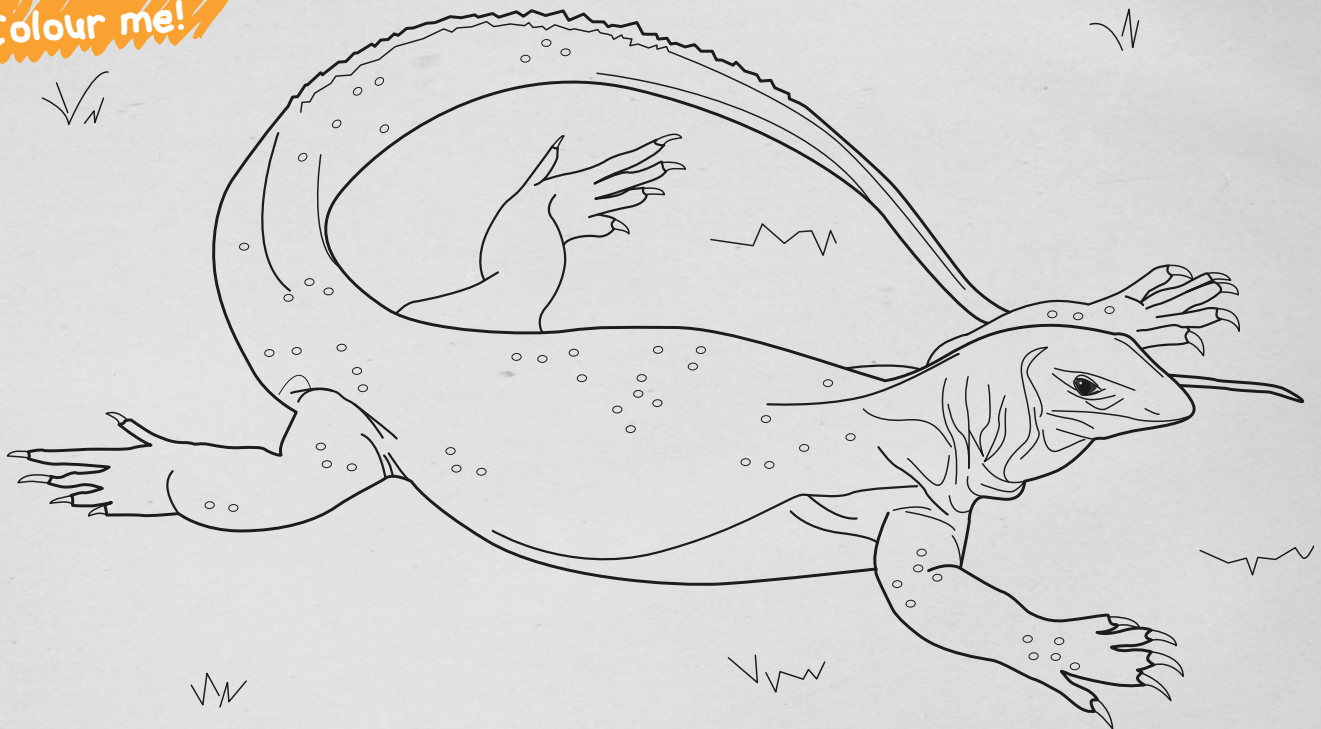
Yes! The Collared Kingfisher is a regular visitor at the Gardens! How nice to know you have them there too!

You know what else has been spotted near the Kingfisher Lake? The Malayan Water Monitor Lizard (*Varanus salvator*)! Have you ever seen one of these magnificent creatures? They are huge! Native to Asia, this lizard can grow up to 3 metres in length! Despite its size, it is an agile climber. In fact, young lizards often hide in trees to avoid predators. I have heard from some of the older folks that its flesh is used in the preparation of traditional medicinal remedies.

Here is a sketch I made of it. Can't wait for you to see it in person! Speaking of which, when are you going to visit me?

Warmest regards,
David

Colour me!



Letters to David: By the Water

Dear David,

Greetings from the "Sunshine State"! We're having a really hot summer this year. We should be called the "Sunburn State"! Our climate is really changing. That's not a good sign.

You were checking with me about one of our native plants, the Alligator Flag (*Thalia geniculata*). Often found growing in ponds or along waterbanks, it grows well in wet ground over here. I have been told it is called "Alligator Flag" because some people believe that the plant can alert people to the presence of a passing alligator by observing the rustling of its leaves. Also, the plant's complex root system gives alligators a perfect hiding place. Did you know it's considered an invasive weed here? It's interesting how it is an ornamental plant in your Gardens! But, you are right! It does have lovely flowers.

I am sending you a sketch to see if this is the plant you are talking about.

It's really great hearing from you again. Do keep in touch!

Your friend,
Martha

Colour me!



Letters to David: 'By the Water

Dear Martha,

It is great hearing from you too.

Yes! This is the Alligator Flag we have here. It is thriving in our Gardens. We have plants from all over the world here. Some of these plants are species that have been growing in Singapore for so many years, they might as well be a local plant! One of them is the Traveller's Palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*).

Contrary to its name, the Traveller's Palm is not a true palm, but is related to the Bird of Paradise. It gets its name from the common belief that travellers can drink the water collected in the cup-like leaf bases during an emergency. But actually, the water is quite smelly and dirty and could make you sick if you drank it! We grow them here along the Dragonfly Lake. Here's a sketch I did of the Traveller's Palm.

Will try to send you some photos of the Gardens soon!

Warmest regards,

David

Colour me!

