

GREEN TREE PYTHON

Adapted for Life in the Trees



This species is specially adapted to survive in the treetops, where it blends in with the leaves and hunts from above.

Vine or Snake?

The green tree python's body is bright leaf-green, which helps it hide in the forest canopy. Some individuals also have white or yellow spots that look like patches of sunlight. Its slender, flexible body allows it to wrap tightly around tree branches and stay motionless for long periods.

This snake is an ambush predator. It uses heat-sensing pits on its face to detect warm-blooded prey like birds and mammals. When a prey animal comes close, the python strikes quickly, grabs it with its sharp teeth, and constricts (squeezes) it until it can no longer breathe. Then it swallows the animal whole.

Changing Colors

Green tree pythons hatch in bright colors, usually yellow, orange, or red. These colors help them blend in with flowers and fallen leaves near the forest floor. As the snake grows and moves higher into the trees, its skin changes color to green. This color change is a key adaptation that helps it remain hidden from both predators and prey.



"Motyxia tularia collaris" by Alex Heyman is marked with CC0 1.0

Built to Strike!

Coiled Position

Body curls into a saddle shape on branches to hide and strike easily

Heat-Sensing Pits

Special pits near the nose that detect body heat from prey

Forked Tongue

Collects scent particles to help the snake smell its surroundings

Hooked Teeth

Sharp, backward-curved teeth for gripping prey

Scales

Overlapping and smooth, help with camouflage and reduce friction

Prehensile Tail

Grips branches and helps the snake stay balanced in trees

Camouflaged Coloration

Bright green skin with white or yellow specks helps the snake blend into leaves

WHAT THEY EAT

Green tree pythons are carnivores. Young snakes eat frogs, insects, and small reptiles. Adults eat birds, mammals, and larger lizards. They may only eat once every few weeks, depending on the size of the meal.

WHERE THEY LIVE



Green Tree Pythons live in the warm, tropical rainforests of New Guinea and northern Australia. They are arboreal, which means they live in trees. They are nocturnal hunters, active mostly at night when it is cooler. During the day, they stay still, coiled on branches. Unlike many other snakes, they rarely come to the ground.

KOMODO DRAGON

King of the Lizard World



THE WORLD'S LARGEST LIZARD

On a few remote islands in Indonesia, a giant reptile rules the land. The Komodo dragon is the largest lizard in the world. They can grow up to 10 feet (3 meters) long and weigh over 150 pounds (70 kilograms), and have sharp claws, powerful jaws, and a long, forked tongue. Although it's a reptile, the Komodo dragon looks and acts very differently from turtles, snakes, or lizards students may know.

Komodo dragons are carnivores, and they will also eat carrion, or dead animals, they find using their excellent sense of smell. Their strong bite and venom help them take down large prey, even if it takes hours or days to finish the hunt. They are one of the few reptiles that act as top predators in their environment, meaning no other animals hunt them. Unlike snakes or turtles that often hide from danger, Komodo dragons use their size and strength to dominate their habitat. They eat deer, wild pigs, smaller reptiles, and even water buffalo.

A Dangerous Place to Grow Up

After a female lays her eggs in a nest, the baby dragons hatch and must survive on their own. The most dangerous threat? Adult Komodo dragons! To stay safe, hatchlings climb trees and live in the branches for their first few years. Once they're big enough, they come down to hunt on the ground.

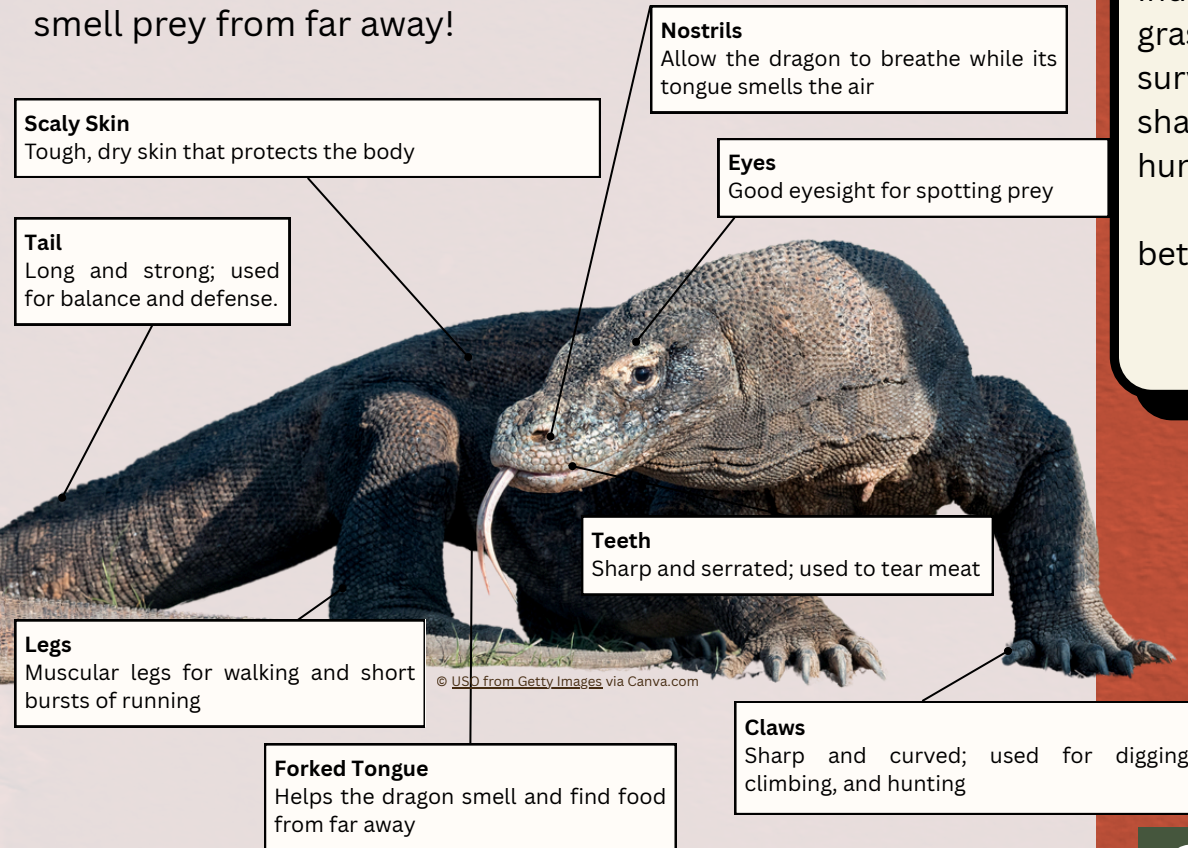
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Komodo dragons can detect dead or injured animals from more than 2 miles away using their tongues to sense smell particles in the air.

BUILT FOR THE HUNT

Komodo dragons are fierce predators. They can run fast for short bursts, use their claws to slash, and swing their tails to fight. But their most powerful weapon is their bite. Scientists have found that Komodo dragons have venom glands that help slow down their prey. After a single bite, the dragon follows the animal until it collapses.

Their forked tongues help them smell prey from far away!



Where They Live



Komodo dragons live in a hot, dry place with few trees and little water. These Indonesian islands have rocky hills, open grasslands, and not many hiding places. To survive here, Komodo dragons rest in the shade during the hottest parts of the day and hunt in the cooler mornings and evenings.

They are strong swimmers and can travel between islands by swimming long distances.



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Did you know komodo dragons can eat up to 80% of their body weight in one meal?

Saltwater Crocodile



King Crocodile

The saltwater crocodile is the largest living reptile on Earth. It can grow up to 23 feet long and weigh over 2,000 pounds. This powerful predator lives in both freshwater and saltwater, and it has special adaptations that help it hunt, swim, and survive in hot, wet places. It may look like a log floating in the water—but don't be fooled. This reptile is built to strike.

Saltwater crocodiles are carnivores. They eat fish, birds, turtles, and mammals. They will even attack animals much larger than themselves, like water buffalo or sharks!

Where They Live

Saltwater crocodiles are found in Southeast Asia, northern Australia, and the coasts of India and the Pacific Islands. They live in rivers, swamps, and coastal areas, and they often rest on muddy banks to soak up the sun.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

A saltwater crocodile can stay underwater for over an hour without taking a breath!

Built to Survive

Saltwater crocodiles are one of the oldest living species on the planet. Crocodiles have existed for over 200 million years, which means they were around when the dinosaurs were still alive! Scientists call them “living fossils” because their bodies haven’t changed much since prehistoric times. Even though individual crocodiles don’t live as long as tortoises or whales, the crocodile species itself is one of the oldest still alive today.

Tail

The saltwater crocodile has a long, muscular tail that it uses to move through water with powerful, silent strokes. It can swim up to 18 miles per hour in short bursts to catch prey.

Armored Skin and Scales

Its back is covered in bony plates called scutes, which protect the crocodile from injuries and help absorb heat from the sun. These scales are strong and ridged like armor.

Eyes and Nostrils

A crocodile can float almost completely underwater while still seeing and breathing. Its eyes and nostrils are located on top of its head, allowing it to spot prey and breathe while staying hidden.



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Salt Glands

Unlike most reptiles, this crocodile can survive in saltwater. It has special salt glands on its tongue that remove extra salt from its body, allowing it to live in rivers, swamps, and even the ocean.

Strong Jaws and Sharp Teeth

The saltwater crocodile has over 60 sharp, cone-shaped teeth. Its jaws close with more force than any other animal on Earth. It uses this power to crush bones and hold tightly onto prey.

Green Sea Turtle

The Gentle Traveler of the Sea



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Green sea turtles can travel over 1,000 miles between their feeding areas and nesting beaches. Some have been tracked swimming more than 2,000 miles across the ocean!

The Ocean's Long-Distance Swimmer

Green sea turtles are some of the biggest and most graceful reptiles in the ocean. They glide through warm seas and return to sandy beaches to lay their eggs. Like all reptiles, they have scaly skin, lay eggs, and are cold-blooded, but this reptile is made for life in the water.



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Green Sea Turtles use their flippers to glide through the water.

Built for the Sea

Green sea turtles can grow up to 5 feet long and weigh over 300 pounds! They have smooth, hard shells and legs that have become powerful flippers. These flippers act like paddles, helping them travel thousands of miles. Unlike land turtles, they cannot pull their heads into their shells.

Did You Know?

Even though they're called green turtles, their shells are usually brown. Their name comes from the green fat inside their bodies.

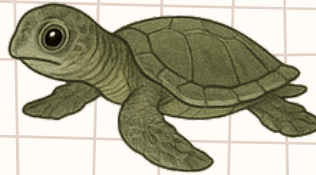
Life Cycle

Egg



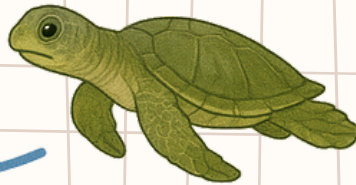
Eggs are laid by adult females on warm beaches and covered with sand for protection. There are about 100 eggs per nest.

Hatchling



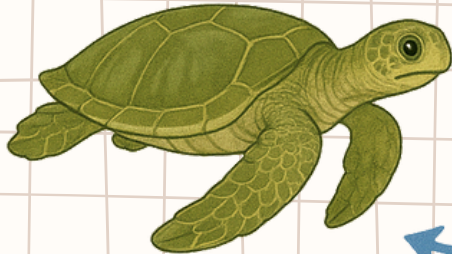
Hatchlings break out of eggs after about 2 months and crawl across sand to reach the ocean. Many are eaten by predators.

Juvenile



Juvenile turtles live in the open ocean, drifting in currents. They grow slowly over many years. Harder shells and flippers help them survive.

Adult



Adult turtles return to coastal waters. They eat seagrass and algae. Females return to their birth beach to lay eggs.

WHERE THEY LIVE

Green sea turtles live in warm ocean waters around the world. They can be found near coral reefs, shallow coasts, and seagrass beds. When it's time to lay eggs, the females return to the beach where they were born. They dig deep holes in the sand and lay about 100 eggs at a time!



SMART WAYS TO SURVIVE

Green sea turtles are herbivores. They eat seagrass and algae. To survive in the ocean, they use their strong flippers to swim for long distances. Some travel thousands of miles between their feeding areas and nesting beaches. Their large size helps protect them from predators, and their flat shell helps them stay hidden in the seagrass.

ARMADILLO GIRDLED LIZARD

A Real-Life Pokémon



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Like all cold-blooded reptiles, the armadillo girdled lizard basks in the sun to warm its body and get energy for the day.

**FUN
FACT**

Even though they are a reptile, these lizards do not lay eggs. They give birth to 1-2 live young.

The Spiky Defender of the Desert

This little lizard may look like a dragon, but it's only about the length of a pencil. The armadillo girdled lizard has a body covered in hard, bumpy scales, and a survival trick that makes it stand out from other reptiles. When it feels threatened, it rolls into a tight, spiky ball, just like an armadillo!

The armadillo girdled lizard eats mostly small insects, especially termites. It also eats other tiny creatures like spiders, beetles, and ants. This lizard waits near cracks in rocks or termite mounds and uses its quick tongue to grab prey. It doesn't need to eat every day and can survive in dry places with very little food.

Where They Live

These lizards are found only in the dry deserts of South Africa. It's hot, rocky, and full of places to hide. Their brownish-yellow color helps them blend in with sand and stone. They don't need much water and can go a long time without drinking.



SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Unlike many reptiles that live alone, armadillo girdled lizards often live in groups. They hide together in cracks between rocks and come out during the day to warm up and look for insects to eat. Living in groups helps them stay safe from predators and makes it easier to spot danger.

Armadillo girdled lizards use body language to communicate. They don't make sounds like some animals do. Instead, they use tail movements, head nods, and body posture to show if they feel threatened or to warn others to stay away. When they feel safe, they stay close to their group. If one lizard spots danger, others may copy its movements and hide too.

Did you know that when rolled up, the armadillo girdled lizard can stay still for hours to avoid predators?



The armadillo girdled lizard's scales are reinforced with bone to protect it from bites!



Becoming a Ball

This lizard gets its name from the rows of tough, spiny scales called girdles that cover its body. The armadillo girdled lizard curls into a ball by biting the tip of its own tail and pulling its body into a tight circle. When it does this, the hard, spiky scales along its back and sides stick out like armor. This shape protects its soft belly and makes it hard for predators to bite or swallow. The lizard can stay curled up and completely still for a long time to avoid being seen or attacked.



GILA MONSTER

*Slow, Spotted, and Seriously
Venomous*

AMAZING!

Gila monsters spend about 95 percent of their time underground!

WARNING COLORS

With a bright orange body and a slow, heavy walk, the Gila monster might not look dangerous—but don't be fooled! This desert reptile is one of the only venomous lizards in the world. It has powerful jaws, a strong bite, and a secret weapon in its mouth. You won't want to mess with this monster!

A Gila monster doesn't need to run away from danger. It wears its warning right on its skin. Its scaly body is covered in black and bright pink or orange spots, like a living caution sign. If a predator gets too close, it opens its mouth wide and lets out a loud hiss. If that doesn't work? CHOMP. It bites down and doesn't let go, while venom seeps from its jaw.

WHERE THEY LIVE

You won't see a Gila monster walking around much. It lives in the hot deserts of the southwestern U.S. and Mexico, where it stays cool by hiding under rocks or sleeping in burrows. It comes out only when it needs food—or sun. Like all reptiles, it's cold-blooded, so it has to soak up warmth before it gets moving.



WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

The Gila monster eats anything it can catch—but it prefers a good snack that doesn't run away. That means eggs, baby birds, lizards, and small animals. It has an amazing sense of smell and can sniff out a nest even underground. When it finds food, it gulps it down in huge bites and sometimes does not eat again for a while.

It may look chubby, but that fat tail is full of stored energy. If food is hard to find, the Gila monster can go months without eating!

LIFE CYCLE



Adult Stage: An adult Gila monster is thick, strong, and covered in bright patterns. It has a fat tail full of stored energy, and its venomous bite helps it hunt larger prey. Adults spend most of their time alone, hiding in burrows and only coming out when they need to eat or bask in the sun. In the wild, they can live for over 20 years.

Egg Stage: Female Gila monster lays 3 to 13 leathery eggs in a warm, sandy burrow. She doesn't stay to guard them. The heat of the desert does the job of keeping the eggs warm.



Hatchling Stage: Four months later a baby Gila monster hatches, it already has black and orange warning colors. Even though it's small, it's ready to take care of itself. Hatchlings know how to hunt tiny animals and hide from danger. They live alone right from the start.



Juvenile Stage: As the hatchling grows, it becomes a juvenile. It still looks like an adult but is smaller and slimmer. Juvenile Gila monsters are learning to survive in the desert. They spend their days finding food, avoiding predators, and storing energy in their tails. It takes about 3 to 5 years to grow up fully.

Monster or Medicine?

Here's a twist: the same venom that makes this lizard dangerous has helped save lives! Scientists studied Gila monster venom and used it to make medicine for people with diabetes. So the next time you hear "monster," think of this lizard as both deadly and helpful.



Gila monsters are nocturnal, hunting at night to avoid the desert heat. This behavior helps them conserve energy and find food more easily.

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