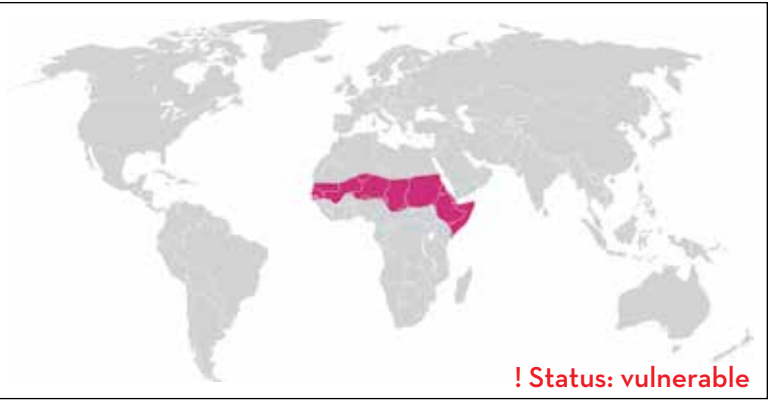


AFRICAN SPURRED TORTOISE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Range | Central and northern Africa in dry regions |
| Habitat | Dry regions, woodlands, and semi desert grass and shrub land |
| Diet (wild) | Grasses and plants, high in fiber and very low in protein; feeding of fruit should be avoided |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Height: 26–35 inches; weight: 110 pounds. Carapace (back shell) is uniform brown; plastron (front shell), head, and limbs are a yellowish color. Juveniles have a pale yellow carapace with brown on the scutes. The head is moderately large with a doubly hooked upper jaw. The upper head scales are small and irregular. The carapace sides descend abruptly and are deeply notched. The growth rings on the scutes are very well defined. The front legs have large scales and the back legs have 2–3 large conical tubercules (spurs) on either side of the tail. Externally, it is hard to tell males from females; males have slightly longer, thicker tails and a more concave plastron. |
| Lifespan | 30–50 years |
| Reproduction | The female digs a nest and eggs are laid and covered with soil. They incubate for 212 days in the wild (136 days in captivity). Hatchlings emerge 1–3 days after a rain, usually at night or early morning, and it takes 3–10 days for the hatchlings to the surface. Mating occurs during the rainy season (February–March) for about one week and may be repeated several times in one day. Breeding males aggressively fight each other for access to females. |
| Behavior | African spurred tortoises can burrow very well and tend to be more active when it rains and become inactive when very hot or very cold. They can also survive extended drought periods in self-dug burrows. Some burrows are permanent and will be shared by two tortoises. Adult males hiss when approached too closely and may retreat or burrow. African spurred tortoises are frequently aggressive, ramming and biting each other. Females do the same, as well as make croaking noises and throw their rear part of their shell violently about. Females may also raise their shell off the ground and drop it, creating a loud thud. |
| Our animals | 2 males. Arrived at PPZ in 07/1999 and 01/2005. Birthplace unknown (private donation) |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African spurred tortoises are the third-largest species of tortoise in the world. • African spurred tortoises like to burrow and are well adapted at doing it. • African spurred tortoises are very aggressive towards each other. This aggression starts from the time they hatch. Ramming into each other and attempts to flip each other over are common behaviors by males and they sometimes end up with bloody limbs and heads. • Some African cultures regard the spurred tortoise as a mediator between men and the gods. As a result, a tortoise is often kept in villages to intercede between the head of the village and the ancestors. In Dogon countries today, a tortoise is kept with the village leader at all times to allow him to communicate with the village ancestors. In Senegal, the tortoises are signs of virtue, happiness, fertility, and longevity. The Senegalese respect the symbolic nature of the tortoise and are very important in helping conservationists ensure reproduction and repopulation of the species. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Testudines

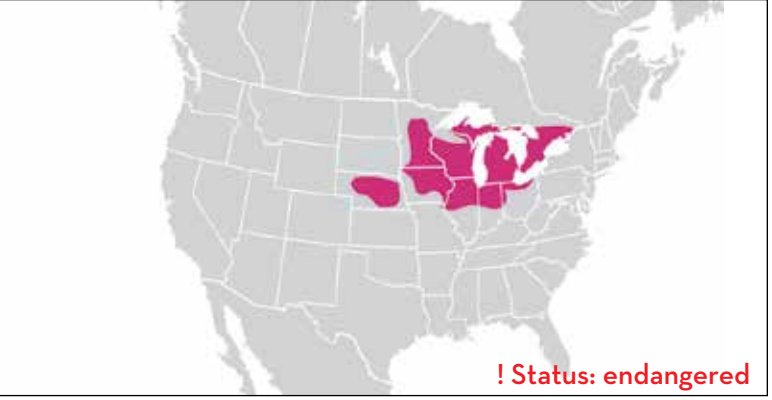
Family
Testudinidae

Genus
Geochelone

species
G. sulcata

BLANDING'S TURTLE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Range | Around the Great Lakes; from central Nebraska and Minnesota eastward through southern Ontario and the south shore of Lake Erie; as far east as northern New York |
| Habitat | Found in isolated coves and weedy bays, and further inland in shallow, marshy waters and ponds; does not occur in the main channel of rivers |
| Diet (wild) | Omnivorous: eats crustaceans and other invertebrates, fish, frogs, crayfish, carrion, berries, and vegetables; capable of catching live fish |
| Diet (captive) | |
| Description | Length: 7–10 inches. Bright yellow chin and throat; carapace is domed but slightly flattened along the midline. The carapace is speckled with numerous yellow or brightly colored flecks on a dark background. The lower shell (plastron) is yellow with dark blotches symmetrically arranged. The head and legs are dark and usually speckled or mottled with yellow. The plastron is hinged but cannot shut very tightly. |
| Lifespan | 80 years |
| Reproduction | Average clutch size is 5–12 eggs. Clutch varies in size depending on the region. Most hatchlings will emerge after 50–75 days (in August or early September) depending on the temperature and moisture in the nest. Females may travel considerable distances from the water to find suitable nest sites. Females dig a nest cavity using alternating movements of the hind feet. This species has temperature-dependent sex determination: eggs incubated below 77° F (25° C) produce nearly all males; those incubated above 86° F (30° C) are nearly all females. Sexual maturity is reached at 14–20 years of age. |
| Behavior | Blanding's turtles hibernate in winter under or near water, in mud or under vegetation or debris. This turtle is very gentle and rarely attempts to bite. It is very agile and a good swimmer. |
| Our animals | 1 male. Arrived at PPZ in 2000. Wild born in Michigan |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blanding's turtles are timid and may plunge into water and remain on the bottom for hours when alarmed. • Blanding's turtles, like most other turtles, emerge to bask on sunny days. Although these turtles are quite tolerant to cold, the summer heat may restrict their activities to early morning and evening, or possibly a more nocturnal lifestyle. • As with many other species that must migrate to suitable nesting locations, fragmentation caused by roads results in the death of many Blanding's turtles every year. Because this species is slow-maturing, juvenile as well as adult survivorship must remain high to ensure this species' survival. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Testudines

Family
Emyidae

Genus
Emydoidea

species
E. blandingii

BLUE TREE MONITOR

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Range | Indonesian island of Batanta |
| Habitat | Rain forest |
| Diet (wild) | Small mammals, insects, invertebrates and eggs |
| Diet (captivity) | Crickets and worms |
| Description | Length: 12–15 inches; tail: additional 24–30 inches. Small, slender lizard with long legs and a prehensile tail that is twice the length of the body. Overall coloring is gray to black with cobalt blue spots over the head, body and tail with a grayish blue underside. Males are larger than females. |
| Lifespan | Wild: estimated at 10 years. Captivity: over 10 years |
| Reproduction | The female lays 1–5 clutches each year, probably dependent on her food intake. She lays her eggs approximately one month after the first mating. In captive settings, courtship has been initiated by the female. When she is receptive to mating, she approaches the male and the two spend time basking on the same perch over a period of days. Female creates a nest of moss, dirt, coconut fiber, and leaf matter. |
| Behavior | Relatively little is known about the natural ecology and behavior of blue tree monitors. From the research completed so far, this species is diurnal and seems to be almost completely arboreal. Their sharp claws give them a secure hold on almost any rough surface and they can climb with considerable ease. Blue tree monitors employ their prehensile tail as a grasping tool. Monitors coil their tails on a plane horizontal to their bodies and rapidly uncoil the appendage for use as a defensive whip. |
| Our animals | 1 female. Arrived at PPZ in 2015 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like most monitor lizards, blue tree monitors are very nervous species and avoid potential predators by fleeing up trees and keeping the tree trunk between themselves and intruders, much like squirrels. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Varanidae

Genus
Varanus

species
V. macraei

BRAZILIAN RAINBOW BOA

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | Lower Central America, east South America |
| Habitat | Preferred habitat includes rivers, streams, lakes and swamps |
| Diet (wild) | Warm-blooded vertebrates |
| Diet (captivity) | Dead rodents |
| Description | Length: 3–6½ feet. In sunlight, it has a multicolored iridescent sheen. Its color ranges from red to orange to mahogany brown with a dark ring pattern down the dorsal surface and dark spots along the sides. |
| Lifespan | Up to 20 years |
| Reproduction | Females are ovoviviparous: young develop in eggs the female retains inside her body. The eggs have an incubation period of 8–12 weeks and each clutch will yield 2–35 live young. They reach sexual maturity at 2–4 years of age. |
| Behavior | Brazilian rainbow boas are shy and nocturnal. Boas are considered primitive snakes; they have vestigial limbs that appear as spurs on either side of the cloaca. Adult males have substantially larger spurs along the side of the cloaca and also have noticeably thicker bases of their tails due to their hemipenes. |
| Our animals | 1 female, 1 male. Born: 01/2004 (male); 01/2004 (female) |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional wisdom held that pythons, anacondas, and boas suffocate their prey. Actually, these predators cut off their victims' blood supply to their major organs. When a boa tightens its powerful body around its prey, the snake cuts off its victim's circulation, causing the prey to pass out within a matter of seconds (most animals can actually survive a relatively long time without breathing.) Once blood flow ceases, organs with high metabolic rates, such as the brain, liver, and heart, begin to immediately shut down (doctors call this ischemia). Death follows within seconds. • Rainbow boas have heat-sensing pits on their face that allow them to detect the body heat of their warm-blooded prey at night. • Rainbow boas are so named because of the iridescent sheen imparted by microscopic ridges on their scales, which act like prisms to refract light into rainbows. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Boidae

Genus
Epicrates

species
E. cenchria

CHUCKWALLA

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Range | Southwest United States, northwest Mexico |
| Habitat | Prefer open flats and rocky areas; often found near large rocks and boulders |
| Diet (wild) | Fruit, leaves, buds, and flowers |
| Diet (captivity) | Produce |
| Description | Length: 15–18 inches. Second largest lizard in the U.S. (gila monster is the largest). These large lizards have loose folds of skin around their neck and shoulders and a thick, blunt tail. Adult males are slightly larger than females and have light colored beige or tan midsections that can be flecked with brown spots, an off-white tail, with the remainder of the body being dark or black. Males have well-developed pores on the inside of the thighs which allow excretions to be exuded for territory marking. Adult females are brownish in color with a scattering of dark brown and red spots. Young have bright bands of color across the body and tail that fade as they age. Small scales cover the body and larger scales protect their ear openings. |
| Lifespan | Wild: 10–15 years. Captivity: Up to 25 years |
| Reproduction | Mating occurs between April and July with about 16 eggs laid between June and August. Chuckwallas use a variety of actions to attract a mate; head bobbing; body push-ups, and open-mouthed displays are all used. |
| Behavior | Chuckwallas are diurnal and extremely shy. When threatened, they scurry into the cracks and crevices of nearby boulders. They emerge from hibernation in mid to late February, but can be seen in crevices between rocks on warm winter days. During warm weather, chuckwallas can be found sunning themselves on large rocks, seeking to reach their ideal temperature of 100–105° F (38–40° C). Males use excretions from their pores on their thighs to mark territory. |
| Our animals | 1 female, 1 male. Born: 04/2005 (female); 05/2005 (male) at Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Burnet Park, New York |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chuckwallas can inflate their lungs up to three times their normal breathing capacity, making it nearly impossible for predators to drag them out of hiding. • Chuckwallas move with a waddling motion but are capable of great bursts of speed. • The common name “chuckwalla” derives from the Shoshone word “tcaxxwal” or Cahuilla “caxwal,” transcribed by Spaniards as “chacahuala.” • Chuckwallas are diurnal animals and spend much of their mornings and winter days basking. These lizards are well-adapted to desert conditions; they are active at temperatures of up to 102° F (39° C). Chuckwallas hibernate during cooler months. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Iguanidae

Genus
Sauromalus

species
S. ater

COMMON MUSK TURTLE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | Native to southeastern Canada and much of the eastern United States, from southern Maine in the north, south through to Florida, and west to central Texas |
| Habitat | Primarily aquatic; spending most of the time in shallow, heavily vegetated waters or slow moving creeks or ponds |
| Diet (wild) | Carnivorous: consume a wide variety of aquatic invertebrates, including crayfish, clams, snails, and insects; will also eat fish and carrion |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Length: 3–5 inches. Black, gray, or brown with highly domed shells. Algae often grow on their carapaces. Skin is a dark-olive to black in color; there are two prominent yellow lines that run from the snout to the neck, one on either side of the eye. For both the male and female, there are barbels located on the chin and the underside of their rather long neck. The snout is pointed and the beak is sharp. Their plastron is small, offering little protection from predators. Their tongues are covered with papillae that allow them to respire underwater. Males can be distinguished from females by their significantly longer tails. |
| Lifespan | Captivity: over 50 years |
| Reproduction | The female lays 2–9 eggs in a shallow burrow or under shoreline debris. Eggs hatch in late summer or early fall. Hatchlings are less than one inch long. Breeding occurs in the spring. |
| Behavior | Musk turtles are almost entirely aquatic. They typically only go onto land to bask or when the female lays eggs. Sometimes they can be found basking on nearby fallen tree trunks or in the branches of trees overhanging the water. |
| Our animals | 2 females, 1 male. Arrived at PPZ in 01/2006 (male); 01/2004, 01/2006 (females). Birthplace unknown (private donation) |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their common names (common musk turtle/stinkpot) are derived from the scent glands located under the rear of their shell. When disturbed, musk turtles will quickly release a foul-smelling liquid from their musk glands to deter predators. • Males are particularly aggressive and will not think twice about biting. • While foraging, musk turtles walk on the bottom of the stream or pond instead of swimming like other turtles. • In the United States, USDA regulations ban the sale of turtles under four inches long as pets. This technically excludes all musk turtles. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Testudines

Family
Kinosternidae

Genus
Sternotherus

species
S. odoratus

EMERALD TREE BOA

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | Amazon Basin (Peru and Ecuador), east through Brazil and Bolivia to the Guianas |
| Habitat | Trees and bushes adjacent to water, swamps and marshes in rain forests |
| Diet (wild) | Birds |
| Diet (captivity) | Dead rodents |
| Description | Length: 6½ feet. Coloring is a brilliant green with whitish to yellowish bands providing excellent camouflage in trees or shrubs while resting or hunting. The body is compressed laterally so that the snake can press close to the tree limbs. The tail is prehensile, grasping the branches in the resting position. The fore teeth are long and the jaw powerful. |
| Lifespan | |
| Reproduction | Females are ovoviviparous: young develop in eggs the female retains inside her body. Emerald tree boas can have very large clutches typically number between 1–8. Gestation is about 7 months. Newborns can be born green, brick red, orange, yellow, or a combination of the colors (known as juvenile polychromatism). By four months, green flecks begin to appear until the emerald green of the adult emerges. |
| Behavior | Due to their laterally compressed body plan, emerald tree boas are not very agile on the ground and are primarily arboreal. When in a resting position, the tail is attached to the branch and the body coils around the tail with equal portions draped across the branch on either side of the tail. Long, powerful front teeth enable these boas to grasp birds and small rodents by snapping at them and holding on. As with other boas, emerald tree boas prefer habitat with abundant vegetation. |
| Our animals | 1 female. Arrived at PPZ in 2005 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional wisdom held that pythons, anacondas, and boas suffocate their prey. Actually, these predators cut off their victims' blood supply to their major organs. When a boa tightens its powerful body around its prey, the snake cuts off its victim's circulation, causing the prey to pass out within a matter of seconds (most animals can actually survive a relatively long time without breathing.) Once blood flow ceases, organs with high metabolic rates, such as the brain, liver, and heart, begin to immediately shut down (doctors call this ischemia). Death follows within seconds. • Emerald tree boas are nervous and likely to bite if handled. • All species of <i>Corallus</i> have well-developed thermoreceptors (heat sensors) between the scales around the mouth which aid in locating prey and aiming its strike. These heat-sensitive pits are critical for locating prey at night. • The only known predators of emerald tree boas are Guianan crested eagles. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Boidae

Genus
Corallus

species
C. caninus

GILA MONSTER

updated March 2017

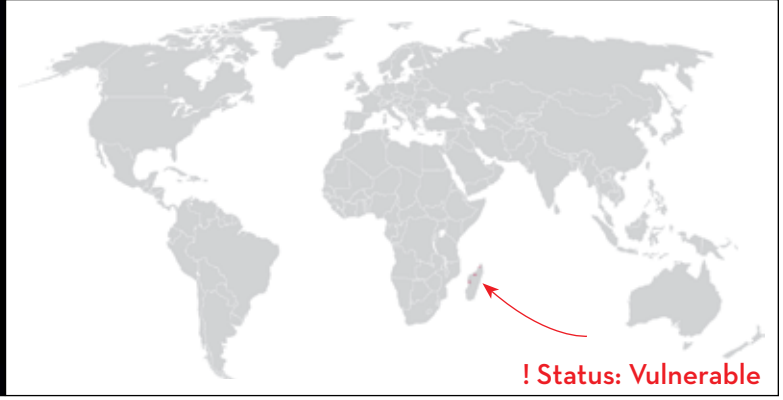


| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Range | Southern Nevada and California, Arizona to New Mexico and Mexico |
| Habitat | Arid to semi arid regions of gravelly and sandy soils, especially areas with some shrubs and moisture |
| Diet (wild) | Nesting rodents and rabbits, eggs, lizards, birds |
| Diet (captivity) | Dead rodents |
| Description | Length: 24 inches; weight: 3–5 pounds. Body is squat and heavy with large head. Scales are beaded yellow, pink, and black. The broad head, chin, and neck are black, as well as the legs and feet. Black eyes have round pupils. Scales have a granular surface, providing excellent camouflage with texture and color among the desert sand and pebbles. Short but sharp claws are made for digging. The tail is short and thick. |
| Lifespan | 20–30 years |
| Reproduction | The female lays a clutch of 1–12 eggs in a hole dug with her forefeet, which she then covers with sand. The eggs remain about 5 inches under the surface, where the sun heats the sand and warms them. After about four months, the young break free and crawl to the surface. Hatchlings are 4 inches long. Juvenile coloring is more vivid than that of adults. Mating usually takes place in early summer and may last up to an hour. |
| Behavior | Slow moving and awkward, Gila monsters are unable to catch anything but eggs and newborn animals. They search for prey by following trails with their tongues and Jacobson's organs. Gila monsters may spend more than 95 percent of their time in burrows, coming out only to feed and occasionally sun themselves. |
| Our animals | 1 female, 1 male. Born: 10/1992 at Woodland Park Zoological Gardens, Seattle, Wash. |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronounced "hee-la." • Gila monsters are the only venomous lizards native to the United States and one of only two known species of venomous lizards in North America; the other being their close relative, the Mexican beaded lizard. Beaded lizards are the largest lizards in North America. • Although Gila monsters' venom, a neurotoxin, is as toxic as that of a coral snake, they only produce only small amounts. Gila monster bites are not fatal to healthy adult humans and there are no recorded instances of human deaths due to Gila monster venom. • Gila monster venom does not seem to be important for hunting; most prey are small enough to be subdued with jaws and teeth. Unlike many snakes, which inject venom into their prey, Gila monsters essentially chew the venom into the open wound when they bite. This is because the venom travels from the salivary glands down grooves in the teeth in the lower jaw. • Only about 100 of the more than 5,000 known lizard species use venom; these include the Gila monsters, monitor lizards, Komodo dragons, legless lizards and iguanas. • Their tails are short and thick, containing a fat store enabling Gila monsters to survive periods of food scarcity. • It is illegal for the Gila monster to be captured or held in the states where it exists. |

Phylum
ChordataClass
ReptiliaOrder
SquamataFamily
HelodermatidaeGenus
Helodermaspecies
H. suspectum

HENKEL'S LEAF-TAILED GECKO

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | Found on the island of Nosy Bé near Madagascar, as well as on the mainland of Madagascar itself, in the region of Ankaranafantsika |
| Habitat | Rainforests at low altitudes |
| Diet (wild) | Insectivorous; sometimes snails |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Length: 9 inches. Coloration is a variation of gray or brown with intermittent lighter shades to mimic tree bark, lichen, and dead leaves. Fringe of skin around head and body further improves camouflage. The relatively short, broadly flattened tail resembles a leaf. Large toe pads provide superb adhesion for climbing. Also has a large triangular head with bulging eyes, which may be pink, brown, or beige with red spots and vertical pupils. |
| Lifespan | Estimated: 7 years; up to 10 years in captivity |
| Reproduction | Female lays two eggs, sometimes three. Amplexus may range from five minutes to several hours. Eggs hatch after 70–120 days. |
| Behavior | Arboreal and nocturnal. Mainly lives on tree trunks but may lay eggs under fallen leaves or logs. Exhibits caudal autotomy or self amputation: tail grows back different than original. May omit a loud distress call to frighten predators. |
| Our animals | 4 males |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leaf-tailed gecko is currently classified as vulnerable by the IUCN. Habitat destruction and deforestation in Madagascar is the primary threat to this animal's future as well as collection for the pet trade. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Gekkonidae

Genus
Uroplatus

species
U. henkeli

MADAGASCAR GIANT DAY GECKO

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Range | Northeast Madagascar and off-shore islands to the east of Madagascar. They have been introduced to southern Florida. |
| Habitat | Intact or degraded native forests; also orchards where there are plenty of perches and food. Common habitats are large trees and on walls of buildings |
| Diet (wild) | Various invertebrates, very small vertebrates, and nectar. They also like to lick soft fruits and pollen. Their main source of water is from the condensation found on leaves. |
| Diet (captivity) | Crickets, wax moths, wax worms, pinky mice, fruit flies, mealworms, houseflies, plus a calcium supplement |
| Description | Length: 12 inches. body is bright green with a red stripe from nostril to eye. Red dots or bars extend down the back; some individuals may have blue spots. Adults may have calcium sacks along their necks. The underside is creamy white to yellow. Under stress, coloration may darken and red markings may become more orange in color. |
| Lifespan | Wild: Unknown. Captivity: 15 years |
| Reproduction | Females lay multiple pairs of eggs during the Dec.–June breeding season. Young hatch after about 48–80 days, depending on temperature. |
| Behavior | Males can be quarrelsome and territorial with other males. Breeding behavior includes shaking of the tail or body, vocalization, and if the female rejects the male, she may change color to a darker green. Motion is usually slow unless startled. Madagascar day geckos tend to be found clinging to vertical surfaces, such as tree trunks and branches, where they rest and sunbathe. |
| Our animals | 3 females, 1 male. Born: 2012–2013 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madagascar giant day geckos are the largest species of gecko. • Madagascar giant day geckos do not have eyelids so they must lick their eyes often to keep them clean. • When geckos shed, they eat their own skin. • Madagascar giant day geckos can be territorial, and younger geckos are most aggressive. They will often make direct attacks on others if they are found in the same place. • Madagascar giant day geckos are often found in the pet trade. This is a threat to their wild population as many are exported out of Madagascar every year. • Madagascar giant day geckos were elevated from subspecies status in 2007 after significant evidence proved there were differences between Madagascar giant day gecko and other members of the Madagascar day gecko family. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Gekkonidae

Genus
Phelsuma

species
P. madagascariensisgrandis

MADAGASCAR HOGNOSE SNAKE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Range | Madagascar, widespread across island; introduced to Comoros |
| Habitat | Native dry forest, scrubland, and grassland |
| Diet (wild) | Small birds, small mammals, lizards, and reptile eggs |
| Diet (captive) | |
| Description | Length: up to 6 feet inches. Typically, black or brown mottled backs with light beige or yellow underside. Like other hognose snakes, the most distinguishing feature is the upturned snout, used for digging in sandy soils. A large, heavy-bodied snake. |
| Lifespan | Captivity: 27.2 years (longest recorded) |
| Reproduction | The female lays 6–12 eggs. The young hatch in 60–80 days and are about 12 inches long. |
| Behavior | Terrestrial, diurnal. Energetic but easily tamed. Will display impressive, but harmless, bluffs to scare away predators. Their large girth and length can be intimidating. Helps to control small mammal populations. |
| Our animals | 1 female. Born: 09/01/2012 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest of the hognose snakes. Mildly venomous, but not particularly dangerous to humans. While unrelated to the North American hognose snakes, they are an example of parallel evolution. • Madagascar hognose snakes are opisthognathous, which means they have fangs in the back of their mouth. • Potter Park's snake was originally labeled as a male. She is adept at escaping her cage and exploring high places. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

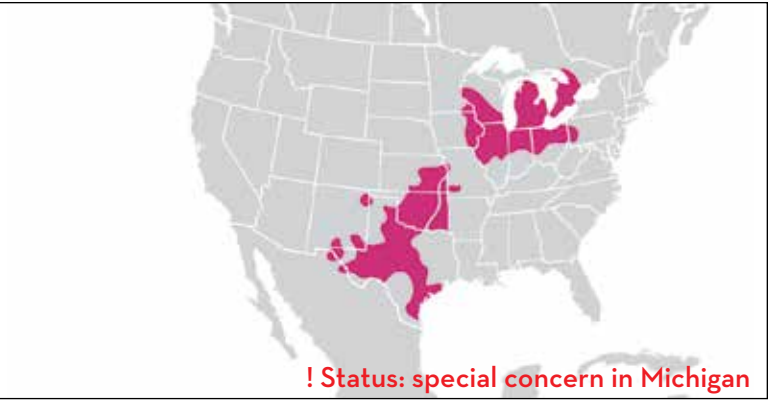
Family
Lamprophiidae

Genus
Leioheterodon

species
L. madagascariensis

MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Range | Found throughout the central United States, from southern Canada to western Arizona, south to the Gulf Coast of Texas, and east to Pennsylvania |
| Habitat | Usually found in damp lowland habitats, including bottomland forests, swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, sedge meadows, and wet prairies |
| Diet (wild) | Small mammals such as voles, white-footed mice, jumping mice, and shrews; sometimes eat snakes, frogs, birds, bird eggs, and insects |
| Diet (captive) | Dead rodents |
| Description | Length: 24–36 inches. Stout, thick bodied snake. Grayish-brown with dark, blotchy pattern on the back. A well-developed rattle is present; newborns have a single button rattle. |
| Lifespan | Captivity: 20 years |
| Reproduction | Ovoviviparous, the female “gives birth” to 8–19 young. Babies stay with the mother for a few days until they shed their first skin, perhaps benefiting from her protection. Females become gravid (pregnant) every other year. |
| Behavior | Massasauga rattlesnakes are shy, reclusive snakes and only seem dangerous because they frequent woodpiles and barns in search of food. Most Eastern Massasauga rattlesnakes are hesitant to strike unless seriously harassed. In winter, unlike other rattlesnake species, they hibernate individually. Massasauga rattlesnakes take cover using crayfish tunnels and rodent burrows as deep as 6 feet (2 meters). In the spring, when days are around 70° F (21° C) and nights stay above 40° F (4° C), they begin to stick their heads above ground. As the head warms, it circulates the warming blood through the rest of the body. The process can take a few hours or a few days. |
| Our animals | 1 female. Born: 2016 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name “Massasauga” means “great river mouth” in the Chippewa language. • Massasauga rattlesnakes have potent venom but relatively short fangs that often fail to penetrate clothing and deliver only small amounts of venom with each bite. • Most venomous snakes deliver a “dry” bite when striking defensively. They will often inject very little or no venom at all in order to save it for killing prey, since it can take up to a week for their venom reserves to replenish after a bite. • Like all pit vipers, Massasauga rattlesnakes have heat-sensing organs, “pits,” on either side of their head that can detect the body heat of their warm-blooded prey. • Vipers all have enlarged, hollow fangs at the front of their mouth which are used to inject a modified saliva into their prey. This saliva is venomous and causes their prey to die. The gaping of the mouth as they bite causes the fangs to swing forward, jabbing the prey, then muscles in their head inject the venom. • New rattle segments are added each time rattlesnakes shed their skin, and conventional wisdom says that by counting the rattles, you can estimate how old a snake is. However, rattle segments are often broken off, so even if a snake has eight rattle segments, it may be more than eight-years-old. • Massasauga rattlesnakes are sometimes confused with eastern timber rattlesnakes, which have tails that are almost completely black. Massasauga rattlesnakes have striped tails. • Young Massasauga rattlesnakes entice frogs and toads to come closer by twitching their tail tips. • Massasauga rattlesnakes are very important in controlling rodent populations throughout their range. • Research on rattlesnake venom has helped develop new medical technologies to treat heart conditions and other diseases. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Viperidae

Genus
Sistrurus

species
S. catenatus catenatus

PAINTED TURTLE

updated March 2017



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | One of the most common turtles in North America; found from southern Canada to northern Mexico |
| Habitat | Prefer shallow, weedy waters with mud bottom (ponds, lakes, marshes) |
| Diet (wild) | Feed mainly on plants, small animals, such as fish, crustaceans, aquatic insects, and some carrion |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Length: 4–10 inches. Low, smooth carapace (upper shell) is black or olive, with red markings along or under the margins. Plastron (lower shell) is yellow or orange with dark central blotch or figure. Head is yellow striped; neck and limbs are red or yellow striped. |
| Lifespan | Captivity: 30 years |
| Reproduction | In late May to early July, the female buries 4–20 soft shelled eggs in a sunny spot. Incubation takes 70–80 days, but hatchlings will often spend the winter in the nest and emerge in spring. Males have very long front claws used to tickle females during courtship. Males are sexually mature when their plastron is about 2.75–3.75 inches in length, usually at 3–5 years of age. At maturity, females can be twice as old (6–10 years) and have longer plastrons. |
| Behavior | Painted turtles are diurnal: during the day, they will bask in the sun, sometimes as many as 50 on one log, stacked on top of each other. At night they will rest on the bottom of a pond or on a partially submerged object such as a rock. In many areas, painted turtles hibernate during the winter months by burrowing into the mud and allowing their bodies to become very cold. |
| Our animals | 1 female, 1 male. Born: 2006 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basking in the sun helps rid turtles of parasitic leeches. • Fossils show that painted turtles existed 15 million years ago. • Painted turtles are vigilant and will seek refuge in the water at the slightest sign of danger. A variety of predators, such as raccoons, otters, mink, and foxes, prey on turtles and their eggs. • As with many other reptile species, painted turtles frequently have bacteria living in their guts that can be harmful to humans but are a normal part of the turtles' gut flora. In particular, painted turtles can be source of the bacteria Salmonella. This is why it is illegal to sell small turtles as pets in the United States. • In the winter, painted turtles hibernate in the mud on pond bottoms. Their body temperature drops to approximately that of the surrounding water and their metabolism slows to a crawl. They won't come up for air until spring. Even though they don't take a breath, painted turtles still need oxygen, which they obtain by taking up oxygen from the surrounding water through their skin. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Testudines

Family
Emyidae

Genus
Chrysemys

species
C. picta

RAT SNAKE

updated March 2017

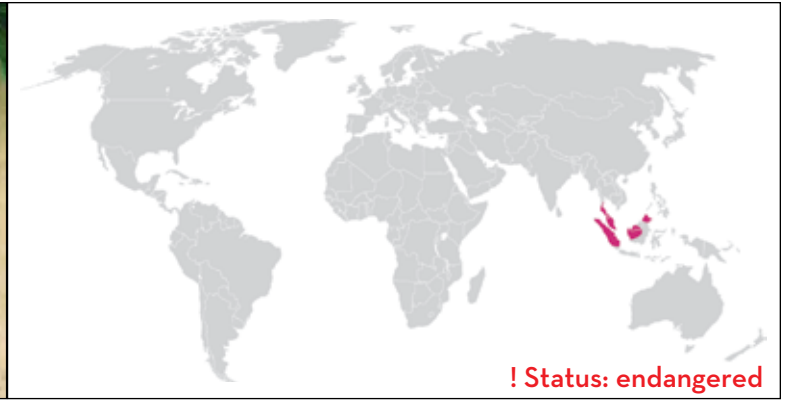


| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | Rat snakes are found from New England south through Florida and west through the eastern halves of Texas and Nebraska and north again to southern Wisconsin. Black rat snakes (<i>E. o. obsoleta</i>) are the most widely distributed; gray rat snakes (<i>E. o. spiloides</i>) range from southern Georgia and northern Florida west through Mississippi and north to southern Kentucky |
| Habitat | Rocky hillsides of mountains to flat farmland; they are excellent climbers and will spend a lot of time in trees |
| Diet (wild) | Primarily known as rodent eaters; juveniles will eat lizards and occasional small frogs |
| Diet (captivity) | Dead rodents |
| Description | Length: 42–72 inches. Powerful slender body with a wedge-shaped head and keeled scales. Black rat snakes, as the name states, are completely black except for their white chin; hatchlings have a pale gray background with black blotches along its back. Gray rat snakes keep the blotched juvenile pattern their entire life; the blotches will vary between dark gray and brown. Juvenile black rat snakes are often mistaken for small gray rat snakes. |
| Lifespan | 20–25 years |
| Reproduction | Five weeks after mating, the female lays 12–20 eggs in a hidden area under hollow logs or leaves or in abandoned burrows. The eggs hatch 65–70 days later. Hatchlings are vigorous eaters and will double their size rather quickly. If conditions are good, females will sometimes produce two clutches a year. Males will begin to seek out a mate typically in late April, May, and early June. |
| Behavior | Rat snakes are active during the day in spring and fall, and nocturnal during summer to avoid heat of the day. They tend to be shy and, if possible, will avoid being confronted. If rat snakes are confronted by danger, they tend to freeze and remain motionless. Rat snakes will sometimes coil their body and vibrate their tails in dead leaves to simulate a rattle. If they continue to get provoked, rat snakes will strike. Rat snakes will also release a foul-smelling musk if they are picked up. |
| Our animals | Black rat snake: 1 male. Arrived at PPZ in 06/2003 (private donation) Gray rat snake: 1 male. Arrived: 06/2003 (private donation) |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rat snakes are excellent climbers and will capture birds and raid nests for eggs. • Rat snakes are very useful around barns and farms. These snakes should be welcome because they help control the pest population. • Rat snakes (<i>Pantherophis obsoletus</i>) come in a variety of subspecies. Seven subspecies occur in the United States, with colors ranging from black and gray, to orange, yellow, tan and some striped. Almost all subspecies are bred in captivity. |

Phylum
ChordataClass
ReptiliaOrder
SquamataFamily
ColubridaeGenus
Pantherophisspecies
P. obsoletus

SPINY HILL TURTLE

updated March 2017



| | |
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| Range | Southeast Asian islands west of the Wallace line; also found on numerous Indonesian islands in the Philippines |
| Habitat | Near streams in tropical lowland forests |
| Diet (wild) | Fruit |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Length: 7–8½ inches. Have a sharp, pointed, spiky-edged carapace, which is particularly pronounced in young turtles. Large adults are often “spineless.” The carapace is brown with a pale streak down the center. Head and limbs are grayish-brown, usually with a yellow or red spot behind the eye. The plastron is buff colored with an intricate pattern of dark radiating lines on each scute. |
| Lifespan | |
| Reproduction | The female lays 1–2 eggs are laid per clutch, usually at night or in the early morning. A hinge develops in the female’s plastron to allow greater flexibility during egg laying. Incubation has only been recorded in captivity: incubation periods last for 106–145 days, although breeding in captivity has largely been unsuccessful and relatively little is known about their reproductive behavior in the wild. Mating behavior is stimulated by rains. Males become excited and begin to chase females in an attempt to mount. Like all species of turtles, there is no parental care provided to the offspring. |
| Behavior | Spiny turtles spend the majority of their time on land foraging for food or burrowing amongst the leaf litter on the forest floor. Juveniles are more terrestrial than adults. They often hide under plant debris or clumps of grass. |
| Our animals | 1 female. Arrived at PPZ in 01/2005 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiny turtles are also known as cog-wheel turtles. • The spiny scutes are thought to be deterrent to predators. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Testudines

Family
Geoemydidae

Genus
Heosemys

species
H. spinosa

updated March 2017

WESTERN TERRESTRIAL GARTER SNAKE



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Range | North America; ranging from Northern Mexico to Canada |
| Habitat | Most commonly found near lakes and slow flowing streams, but can also live in deserts, plains, mountains, meadows, and forests. They can be found at elevations ranging from sea level to 3,993 meters. |
| Diet (wild) | Slugs, salamanders, small mammals, and lizards. Individuals that live around water sources will also hunt frog and toad larvae, leeches, and fish. |
| Diet (captivity) | |
| Description | Length: 42 inches. Grayish-green back with a yellow belly and a yellow stripe that runs the length of their body on each side. Females are larger than the males. |
| Lifespan | Wild: 2 years. Captivity: 12 years |
| Reproduction | Garter snakes are ovoviviparous with a gestation period of 2–3 months. An average of 12 offspring are born and like most snakes, immediately after birth they are left to defend themselves and must start to feed in order to survive the long winter hibernation. Mating typically occurs in the spring as the temperature begins to rise. Western terrestrial garter snakes reach sexual maturity at 2 years of age. |
| Behavior | Local climate and seasons dictate when western terrestrial garter snakes are most active. They spend the mornings warming up in the sun, and once warmed up they spend the day hunting. They require a lot of energy to invest in reproduction and they must eat enough to survive the long winter hibernation. They return to shelter in the evening before temperatures drop too low. During the warmer months, these are solitary animals but they den communally for winter hibernation. |
| Our animals | 1 female; 1 male. Born: 02/06/2016 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western terrestrial garter snakes will bite when they feel threatened. They are considered mildly venomous, but because they do not have an effective means of delivering the venom and it is only mildly toxic, the only effect is minor irritation. They will also secrete the contents of their cloaca when threatened, a behavior called musking. The secretion has a very foul odor that the snake will rub on itself and on predators when attacked. |

Phylum
Chordata

Class
Reptilia

Order
Squamata

Family
Colubridae

Genus
Thamnophis

species
T. elegans