

## CHUCKWALLA

updated March 2017



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| <b>Range</b>            | Southwest United States, northwest Mexico                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Habitat</b>          | Prefer open flats and rocky areas; often found near large rocks and boulders                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Diet (wild)</b>      | Fruit, leaves, buds, and flowers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Diet (captivity)</b> | Produce                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Description</b>      | 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. |
| <b>Lifespan</b>         | Wild: 10–15 years. Captivity: Up to 25 years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Reproduction</b>     | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Behavior</b>         | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Our animals</b>      | 1 female, 1 male. Born: 04/2005 (female); 05/2005 (male) at Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Burnet Park, New York                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Cool stuff</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Chuckwallas move with a waddling motion but are capable of great bursts of speed.</li> <li>• The common name “chuckwalla” derives from the Shoshone word “tcaxxwal” or Cahuilla “caxwal,” transcribed by Spaniards as “chacahuala.”</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>                                              |

Phylum  
ChordataClass  
ReptiliaOrder  
SquamataFamily  
IguanidaeGenus  
Sauromalusspecies  
*S. ater*