

## **Reptile and Small Mammal House Audio Script**

### **Segment 1:**

Welcome to Potter Park Zoo!

Today we are going to visit the Reptile and Small Mammal House. This audio tour is divided into multiple segments. You will learn information about each animal we currently house in this building. We hope you have a great time!

### **Segment 2: Monitor**

We are entering the Reptile and Small House and starting on the left side of the building. The first animal we see is the Blue Tree Monitor. This slender lizard, typically 3 feet in length, displays a striking coloration of gray to black with cobalt blue spots across its body, including the long prehensile tail, which is twice the length of its body. Blue tree monitors can only be found on the Indonesian island of Batanta in forested areas. They can get a secure hold on almost any rough surface because of their sharp claws and are able to climb with ease. They employ their prehensile tail as a grasping tool. The species is currently endangered.

### **Segment 3: Tegu**

Next is the Argentine black and white tegu. Argentine black and white tegus are large lizards that can reach nearly five feet in length. They have a mottled black-and-white coloration that often is arranged into a banding pattern across the back and tail. This large lizard lives in East and Central South America. This species is invasive in the southern US and have negatively affected alligators, turtles, and ground-nesting bird population by consuming eggs. Tegus burrow in the winter providing protection from dehydration and weather. The species is of least concern.

### **Segment 4: Skink**

Now we have arrived at the prehensile-tailed skink. The prehensile-tailed skink is a large, short-limbed, practically no-necked lizard. It is the largest of all skinks, growing to two and a half feet in length on average. In the wild, this skink is a protected species that can be found on the Solomon Islands archipelago. The prehensile-tailed skink is the world's largest species of skink. It is the only skink adapted to arboreal living with the help of a prehensile tail. They can tolerate only those in their social group which is called a circulus.

### **Segment 5: Porcupine**

Currently on the far left of the building we have our prehensile-tailed porcupine. Prehensile-tailed porcupines are 12 to 24 inches long, with almost equally long tails (13 to 19 inches). They weigh between 4 to 11 pounds, exhibiting body colors ranging from yellowish to almost black. This species of porcupine can be found on the Northern half of South America. Their long, muscular prehensile tail is well adapted to life in the trees. Similar to North American porcupines their quills are barbed at the tip. Baby prehensile-tailed porcupines have adult-length quills by 10 weeks of age. The quills are only about a half-inch long when they are born.

### **Segment 6: Hognose snake**

As we move around the corner, we approach the Madagascar giant hognose snake. This snake, which is the largest among hognose snakes known for their upturned snouts, can reach lengths of up to six feet. They boast prominent eyes shielded by protruding scales, guarding against airborne debris. These snakes exhibit mottled black or brown backs and a contrasting light beige or yellow underside. Native to Madagascar the snake lives in shrublands, grasslands, and humid and dry forests. It is the largest of the hognose snakes. They are diurnal, which means they are only active during the day. These snakes' prey on small birds, rodents, and reptile eggs.

### **Segment 7: Jamaican Boa**

The Jamaican boa's habitat is next and as it implies in the name, this boa is located in the forests of Jamaica. The Jamaican boa showcases a striking coloration, beginning with a golden-green hue on its head and the front part of its body. This coloration transitions into black zigzag crossbars as you move toward the snake's rear section. In total, these boas can grow over seven feet in length. They thrive on eating mice and can grow to five to eight feet. This species of snake is Jamaica's largest terrestrial predator. They are known as an ambush predator that constricts its prey. Their status in the wild is vulnerable.

### **Segment 8: Tarantula**

We are now approaching our Chilean rose tarantula. Chilean Rose Tarantulas boast a dark brownish-black body adorned with vibrant orangey-pink hair. Their eight legs are covered in hair, and they also possess two pedipalps, which serve as sensory organs and manipulators. These tarantulas can attain a size of 5 inches or more. Additionally, females tend to be larger and heavier, while males exhibit longer legs. This tarantula lives in the deserts of Chile and is of least concern. It will obtain water from the dry climate through food and fog. Their leg span can reach 5.5 inches. The special hairs on the abdomen are called urticating hairs and are spine like. They can be ejected when they feel threatened. The spines can cause an irritating rash on human skin.

### **Segment 9: Emerald boa**

As we continue on this wall, we will find the emerald tree boa that inhabits northern South America where it is of least concern. Adult emerald tree boas have green bodies with a white stripe and white bands on their back. Their belly is yellow. When they're young, they're red or orange, but they change to green between 4 to 12 months of age. It's like they grow into their green colors as they get older. This boa is a nocturnal ambush hunter that is ovoviviparous. They have a vertical pupil like a cat's eye to help them hunt. An old wive's tail states that only venomous snakes have cat's eye pupils which is not true. This snake is a constrictor and not venomous.

### **Segment 10: Emperor Scorpion**

In the habitat under the emerald tree boa is the emperor scorpion that is from West Africa. This one of the world's largest scorpions, growing up to 8 inches long, with males being about 6 inches long. It has a black, shiny body, two large front pincers, four legs, and a long tail ending in a stinger. Juveniles resemble adults but are white in color. Their conservation status has not been evaluated. Females give birth to live young which are defenseless and carried on their mother's back until they are old enough to be on their own. The species live in groups of 15 individuals.

### **Segment 11: Day Gecko**

Now we have reached our geckos. The first is a Madagascar day gecko that lives in Madagascar but has been introduced to the islands of Reunion and Mauritius which are off the eastern coast of Madagascar. It was also introduced in Florida. They are known for their bright lime green body with red spots on the back and a red stripe near the head. They can reach up to 12 inches in length and males have broader heads and more vibrant colors than females. They have special types of scales on their toes that allow them to cling to smooth surfaces. Male day geckos may change color when they are stressed.

### **Segment 12: Leaf Gecko**

The second gecko we have is the Henkel's leaf-tailed gecko. Henkel's leaf-tailed geckos are 5 to 7 inches long and are known for their olive green or brown color with dark spots. They have distinctive triangular heads with prominent eyes, and their skin flaps, long limbs, and leaf-shaped tails make them masters of camouflage. This gecko lives in dense primary rainforests at low altitudes in Madagascar's region of Ankarafantsika and an island nearby. Their status in the wild is vulnerable. If the gecko loses its tail, a new tail will grow back. The new tail will look different than the original. This nocturnal species can emit a loud distress call to frighten predators.

### **Segment 13: Bats**

On the center wall of this building, you will find a large exhibit with Seba's fruit bats. Seba's short-tailed bats have dark brown to gray fur, with some rare rusty-orange individuals. They are tiny, with an adult length of 1.8 to 2.5 inches, weighing around 0.6 to 0.7 ounces, and have an 8 to 9-inch wingspan. Their native habitat is moist evergreen, dry forests in South America where they are of least concern. Seba's fruit bats roost in colonies of 10-100 in caves or hollow trees. They play an important ecological role as pollinators due to the amount and variety of fruit they eat.

### **Segment 14: Rainbow boa**

We are now approaching three habitats with snakes. The first snake is the Brazilian rainbow boa. The Brazilian rainbow boa is a medium-sized snake, typically 5-7 feet long. It has an iridescent appearance with colors ranging from red to mahogany brown and a distinctive dark ring pattern on its back. They can be found in the Amazon River basin and their conservation status has not been evaluated. The ridges on their scales act as prisms and create the iridescence on their skin. Like other boas, rainbow boas are ovoviviparous, meaning they give birth to live young.

### **Segment 15: Pine Snake**

As we continue to move, we find the Northern pine snake that can be found in the Northern and East Central United States. Northern pine snakes are sizeable, stout snakes with a base color of white, tan, or yellowish, adorned with dark brown or black markings. These markings start as mottling on the head and transition into distinct blotches towards the tail. They typically reach lengths of 48-66 inches. Their status in the wild is of least concern. Pine snakes are very efficient diggers and spend the majority of their time underground. They hibernate in underground burrows during the winter months. These snakes are constrictors but when threatened will mimic rattlesnakes by hissing loudly and rattling their tails. They are also known as the bullsnake, black and white snake, pilot snake, horned snake, and white gopher snake.

### **Segment 16: Rat Snake**

Last on this wall is the Texas rat snake that can be found in bayou, swamps, forests, stream valleys and canyons from the west of the Mississippi River to Texas. The Texas rat snake is a medium to large snake, reaching 4–5 ft in length, usually yellow or tan with brown to olive-green blotches along its body. Their status in the wild is of least concern. Rat snakes are excellent climbers and will capture birds and raid nests for eggs. They are very useful around barns and farms. This species of snake comes 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. They are active during the day in spring and fall, and nocturnal during summer to avoid the heat.

### **Segment 17: Cotton tops**

At the far-right end of the building is our family of cotton-top tamarins. Cotton-top tamarins have mottled gray-brown fur on their shoulders, back, and rump, with white stomachs and limbs. They sport reddish-brown hair on their thighs and tail base, while the rest of the tail is gray-brown. Their head-body length is 8.2–10.2 in, with a non-prehensile tail measuring about 13–16 in and weighing less than 1.1 pounds. This species of tamarin inhabits lowland rainforests and mountain forests on the slopes of the Andes in Columbia. The species is critically endangered. Cotton-top tamarins live in groups averaging three to nine individuals. They have sophisticated communication with over 30 calls and show signs of grammatical structure.

### **Segment 18: Rattlesnake**

As we turn the corner, we approach more reptiles. The first is the Massasauga rattlesnake that lives in wooded areas and wetlands in midwestern United States, including the lower peninsula of Michigan. The eastern massasauga rattlesnake is gray or grayish brown with dark blotches edged in white and spots on its back and sides. It measures 18.5-30 inches long, with a record length of 39.5 inches, and has a blackish, unpatterned belly. They are a threatened species in the state of Michigan. This species of rattlesnake is shy and tends to avoid people. They will typically leave an area when threatened and are Michigan's only venomous snake.

### **Segment 19: Gila monster**

The next habitat we approach is shared amongst two species of lizards. The first lizard is the Gila monster that can be found in dry desert scrub and rocky mountain foothills in south-western United States and Mexico. The Gila monster is a large, heavy-bodied lizard with bright pink or orange and black skin. It has a large head, small beady eyes, and a short, fat tail, often reaching up to 22 inches in total length, making it the largest lizard in the United States. They are a threatened species in their wild habitat. Gila monsters are one of the only venomous lizards in the world. They are slow-moving and awkward, making it hard for them to catch anything but eggs and newborn animals.

### **Segment 20: Chuckwalla**

The second lizard that lives in this habitat with the Gila monster is the chuckwalla. The chuckwalla inhabits the same area as the Gila monster, southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Adult chuckwallas are over 15 inches long, with half of their length in their tail. Males have black heads and forelimbs, with various body colors, their trunks may be black, red, orange, gray, or yellow. The

chuckwalla is the second-largest lizard in the United States. They can be found in rocky deserts and seek shelter in rock crevices. When threatened, they retreat into the cracks of nearby boulders. They then inflate their lungs to three times their normal breathing capacity, making it nearly impossible for predators to drag them out of hiding.

### **Segment 21: Timber rattlesnake**

The last reptile we see before we are at the exit doors, is the timber rattlesnake. The timber rattlesnake is a large pit viper, usually 2.5-5 feet long, but some may reach up to 7 feet. They have a gray, sometimes pinkish, body with a colored stripe down their back, which can be orange, yellow, pinkish, brown, or black. Timber rattlesnakes are found in south central and eastern United States and are of least concern. They are ovoviviparous which means they give birth to live young. The species does not tolerate winter and may hibernate for up to seven months of the year in a group of 15-60 snakes. They can strike at least half the length of its body.

On this audio tour you have now experienced all of the habitats we have on the walls of the building. We will now move to the center of the building to overview the animals living in tanks.

### **Segment 22: PRCT**

In the first tank is the Puerto Rican crested toad that can be found only in Puerto Rico in rocky, semi-arid areas of evergreen forests. Male PRCT toads are olive green and gold, while females may have yellow sides. Both have pebbled skin and golden eyes. These toads are medium-sized, reaching 2.5 to 4.5 inches in length with a unique cranial crest and large eyes. This species of toad is critically endangered but was thought to be extinct from 1931 to 1967. They were reintroduced at six locations within its historical range. They then became the first amphibian on the Species Survival Plan from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Potter Park Zoo has participated in the PRCT species survival plan since 2009 along with a handful of other AZA accredited zoos. This program focuses on breeding a genetically diverse population and releasing into the wild to repopulate the toad's native habitat. Our zoo has successfully transported over 22,300 tadpoles to release sites in Puerto Rico and we continue to send tadpoles every year.

### **Segment 23: Musk**

In the very middle of the building are tanks that house three different species of turtles. The first turtle is the common musk turtle that lives in shallow waters with slow currents and abundant aquatic vegetation. The common musk turtle is a relatively small turtle with an average length of 3 to 5 inches. The carapace is brown or black and has a smooth, oval shape with a high dome. They can be found in eastern and midwest United States and are of the least concern. Female musk turtles lay between two and nine eggs in the spring and the eggs hatch in late summer or early fall. This species of turtle is also called the 'stink pot' turtle due to the pungent smell it emits when threatened. They have a very long neck which can reach their hind legs and they may bite if handled. Though highly aquatic, they rarely swim and prefer to walk along the bottom.

### **Segment 24: Spotted Turtle**

Another turtle living in the tanks is the spotted turtle. Spotted turtles have smooth, black shells with yellow spots and orange or yellow on the head, neck, and forelegs. They're small, growing to around 4.5

inches and weighing  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds. This species of turtle prefers shallow aquatic area with slow-flowing or standing water with abundant vegetation. They can be found in the Great Lakes and East Coast of North America where they are endangered in the wild. In Michigan, their status is threatened and are legally protected. During the winter, spotted turtles bury themselves in muddy wetlands and drastically slow their metabolism, which allows them to survive without food and very little oxygen. Male's have brown eyes while females have orange or yellow eyes.

### **Segment 25: Eastern turtle**

Our last turtle is the Eastern box turtle that prefers to live on land near streams or ponds. Eastern box turtles are recognized by their high-domed, rounded, hard upper shell, called a carapace. What sets them apart are the vivid orange and yellow markings on their dark brown shell, as well as their four toes on the hind feet. They typically grow between five and six inches in length. They can be found near the Great Lakes and East Coast of North America. The species is vulnerable in the United States and of special concern in Michigan. The bottom of their shell, called a plastron, is hinged and when threatened the box turtle will pull its head, legs and tail in and pull the bottom of their shell up against the top. Male turtles often have red eyes while females often have brown. They have a very strong homing instinct and rarely travel more than 1.5 miles from their home territory.

### **Segment 26: Red Eye Tree frog**

The last stop on our audio tour of the Reptile and Small Mammal House is the red-eyed tree frog and poison dart frog tanks. The red-eyed tree frog can be found in lowland tropical rainforests of southern Mexico and throughout Central America. The conservation status of this frog is of least concern. The red-eyed tree frog is a small species, typically measuring about 2 to 2.5 inches in length. It is easily recognized by its vibrant green body, big, bright red eyes, and orange toes. Their red eyes are thought to be a defense mechanism called a 'startle coloration' that may surprise a predator and give the frog enough time to escape. The vivid colors serve as a warning to predators that it is toxic, and its striking appearance makes it one of the most iconic frog species. They will tuck their limbs in, so that all the brightly colored areas are hidden from view to blend in to the leaves and avoid detection. The median life expectancy is three to five years. During breeding season, males call to attract females. These frogs may vibrate branches to communicate with other red-eyed tree frogs in the area.

### **Segment 27: Poison Dart Frog**

The last animal we have in this building is our green-and-black poison dart frogs. The poison dart frog is a tiny, brightly colored species, usually measuring between 0.5 to 2 inches in length. These frogs have sleek, slender bodies with smooth, glossy skin that comes in a variety of striking colors, including reds, blues, yellows, oranges, and greens, often adorned with intricate patterns. They live in humid lowland forests under mountains in central and South America and are of least concern. These frogs are too small to jump from tree to tree so they must return to the ground to travel. They are diurnal and have excellent eye sight, hearing, and sense of smell.

### **Segment 28: Outro**

Thank you for exploring the wonders of Potter Park Zoo's Reptile and Small Mammal House!

We hope you had a great time learning about all the animals inside this building.