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Australia Zoo
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Amazing Animals
Fact sheets

# Tortoises and Turtles

Turtles and Tortoises are common name for reptiles that make up the order Chelonia, (also known as Testudines), recognized by a hard shell that encloses the internal organs of the body. Turtles are ancient life forms. The earliest fossils recognized as turtles date from the Triassic period, about 200 million years ago; thus, turtles were in existence prior to the emergence of the great dinosaur groups. Unlike dinosaurs, however, turtles have continued to adapt and flourish.

## Aldabran Tortoise

The Aldabran tortoise is the largest species of land tortoise in the world. They can grow to roughly 1 metre tall and may weigh in at 300 kilograms when fully grown. Their shell is grey in colour with dark grey to almost black coloured head and legs.

### Habitat

These giant tortoises inhabit the islands of Aldabra, situated off the east coast of Africa, in the Indian Ocean. The islands are rough and rocky with limited vegetation.

### Diet

The Aldabran tortoise is herbivorous, eating grasses, shrubs, flowers and leaflitter. They will also eat cactus and lichen.

### Breeding

This species will reach sexual maturity at about 20-25 years of age. Mating season is between February and March. Males will let out a loud bellowing sound to entice the female to mate with him. After mating, the female buries 10-20 spherical eggs in the sand or soil where they are incubated by the heat of the sun for a two month period. When the hatchlings emerge they are only about 6 centimetres long and have soft shells. They are very prone to predation at this stage.

## Australia Zoo Aldabran Tortoise profiles

### Igloo

Igloo can be identified by his large, round shell (thus giving him his name), but this is not the only way to identify him; his personality and the way he decides to do something make him the odd one out of the three Aldabran boys. When Igloo wants a drink, he does not just lap at the water; he climbs into the whole pond. When Igloo wants something to eat, he is not satisfied with a handful of vegetables; he wants the whole bucket full. So when Igloo decides he wants to do something, there simply is no stopping this determined tortoise!

## Threatened Species!

Tortoises and Turtles are facing extinction within the next fifty years.

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