



# Amazing Animals Fact sheets

## Lizards

There are over 3000 lizard species distributed throughout the world, and because they are reptiles the majority are found in warmer climates. They range in sizes from 6cm up to 3m long! Lizards have scaly skin that is shed throughout the year, often in irregular patches. Some members of the lizard family are carnivorous (meat only), however there are others that are herbivorous (plants only) or omnivorous (plants and meat).



### Fijian Crested Iguana

When Fijian crested iguanas first hatch from their eggs they are dark green, but after several hours their skin becomes bright emerald green and narrow white bands can be seen along their body. Their distinctive crest is also present from birth and can grow up to 1.2cm long. Juvenile crested iguanas look just like miniature versions of their parents. Females are the same in appearance as the males. Adults grow to 70-80cm and weigh 300-350 gms.

#### Habitat

Crested iguanas are a rare species restricted to the rain shadow forests of a few scattered islands in the Fiji Island group, including the tiny island of Yadua Taba. The Fijian crested iguana on Yadua Taba Island is the only protected population in the world. Due to the small size of each island population, the species as a whole is extremely vulnerable. Their life is spent mostly off the ground amongst the branches and leaves of their forest home.

#### Diet

A Fijian crested iguana's diet is mainly herbivorous, eating a wide variety of leaves, shoots and fruits from trees and shrubs. They will also eat small insects from time to time. Their favorite food is from the Vau tree which bears sweet

hibiscus flowers and is also the species of tree they spend most of their time in.

#### Breeding

Mating season for the Fijian crested iguana is from March through to April. They have the longest incubation period of any iguana in the world - up to nine months. The eggs are white and leathery, with the average number of eggs in a clutch being four. A couple of weeks before hatching, a brown oval mark appears on the surface of the egg. This marks the spot where the baby crested iguana's head will pop out of the shell. It can take up to a whole day for the baby iguana to completely hatch.

### Australia Zoo Fijian Crested Iguana profiles



#### Kermit

Kermit is one of our gorgeous Fijian crested iguanas. He was born in 2005 and you have to admit, he is an absolutely amazing looking animal.

We are very fortunate to have these iguanas here at Australia Zoo, especially given they are amongst the most critically endangered lizards on the planet. They are only found on three islands in the west of Fiji.

Kermit is great, he loves coming out for walks around the zoo and loves to have his photo taken. So much so, Kermit is often featured in our Australia Zoo calendars.

#### Endangered Species!

Very low numbers are left in the wild. Lizards are at risk of extinction within the next ten years.

The Fijian crested iguana is currently listed as 'Critically Endangered' and is facing extinction. Their biggest threats are some of the introduced species (rats, mongoose, goats)

which either prey on the iguanas and their eggs or directly compete for food. There is an Iguana Sanctuary on Yadua Taba Island that is currently free of these introduced species and it acts as a safe haven for the iguanas. This sanctuary has resulted in an increase in the iguana population on this island.</p>

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