

Rainforest Animals

of South America



Active Wild

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Facts Pack

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Introduction

The animals in this book are found in the rainforests of South and Central America. Most live in the Amazon Rainforest, which covers a bigger area than all of the world's other rainforests put together.

Rainforests are warm and wet places, with high rainfall. These conditions encourage plant growth, which in turn creates a habitat for a vast range of animals. It is believed that over half of the Earth's plant and animal species live in the rainforest. It is also estimated that there are millions of species of plants, insects and microorganisms in the rainforest that are still to be discovered.

Learn more about animals at www.activewild.com

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Iguana



Iguanas are large, fierce-looking lizards with sharp teeth and long, powerful tails. Surprisingly, despite their fearsome looks, iguanas are mostly herbivorous (plant-eating).

Iguana Species

There are two species of iguana, and several other closely-related species in the Iguanidae family that have 'iguana' in their names.

The two species of iguana are the **green iguana** and the **lesser Antillean iguana**.

Iguana Basics

Iguanas, despite being large and heavy-looking, are fast and agile. Their tails

make up over half their length, and can be used as a defence against predators.

Iguanas have a row of spines running down their backs to their tails. Iguanas have extremely good eyesight, and can even see ultraviolet wavelengths.

Iguanas spend most of their lives in trees.

How Big Are Iguanas?

Iguanas can grow to between 1.5 and 2 metres in length. They weigh around 4 – 8 kg.

Iguanas Have Three Eyes!

Iguanas have a special third eye on the top of their heads. This small eye, called

a parietal eye, doesn't see images like normal eyes, instead, it senses lightness and darkness, and movement. Iguanas use their parietal eye to detect predators.

What do iguanas eat?

Iguanas eat grasses, leaves, flowers and fruit.

Iguana Habitats

Iguanas are good climbers, and spend much of their lives in the trees. These hardy reptiles can fall large distances without injury, slowing the descent by grabbing onto twigs and leaves with their hind legs.

Iguanas often live near water, and are excellent swimmers. They use their tails to propel themselves through the water.

Iguana Defensive Tactics

Iguanas have sharp teeth, spines on their backs, and powerful tails, all of which can be used against attackers.

Like many other lizards, iguanas can shed their tails. They do this if they are being attacked by a predator. The tail comes off in the predator's mouth, allowing the iguana to make its escape. The tail usually grows back, although often not as long as it was before.

Another defensive tactic used by iguanas in trees is simply to jump into water and swim to safety.

Green Iguana

Despite their name, green iguanas vary in colour from green to black. Some are even pink! Their colour allows them to blend in to their environment, protecting them from predation.



Green iguanas have a large, round scale on the sides of their faces. This is known as a subtympnic shield.

The green iguana is usually simply called an 'iguana'. When people talk about iguanas, they are usually referring to green iguanas.

Green iguanas live in Central and South America and on Caribbean islands. They are also kept as pets.

Lesser Antillean Iguana

Lesser Antillean iguanas are found on the Lesser Antilles Islands in the Caribbean Sea. They are an endangered species due to habitat loss, hunting, and competition with green iguanas.

Lesser Antillean iguanas have shorter faces than green iguanas and do not have stripes on their tails. They also lack the big scale on the side of the head that is present in green iguanas.



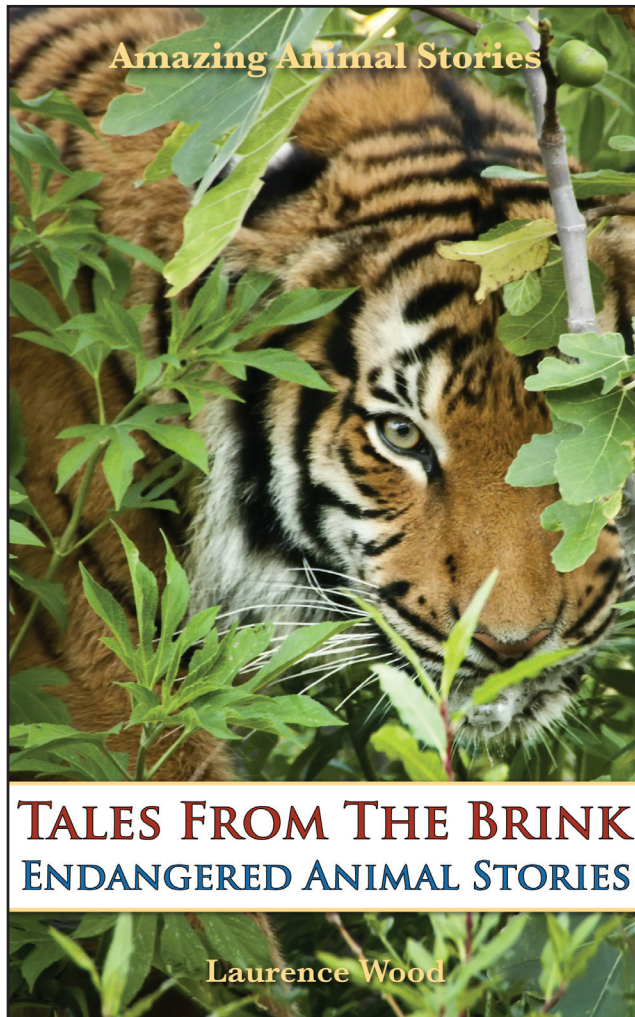
Lesser Antillean Iguana

Iguana Facts

- Iguanas live in tropical rainforests in Central and South America, and on Caribbean islands.
- Iguanas have extremely good eyesight, and can even see ultraviolet wavelengths.
- Iguanas can fall large distances (up to 15 metres) without hurting themselves. Useful for a creature that spends much of its life up a tree!
- The tail of an iguana is very powerful and can be used as a weapon. Iguanas also have sharp teeth and a strong jaws.
- Iguanas can shed their tails to escape predators.
- Iguanas' main predators are birds of prey.
- In the wild, iguanas can live for 20 years.
- Iguanas, like all reptiles, are cold blooded, which is why they have to bask in the sun to warm their bodies to the correct temperature.
- Iguanas are very good swimmers, and often live near water.
- Iguanas breath in lungfuls of air to help them to float in the water.

Available From Active Wild:

Tales From The Brink is an exciting collection of short stories about the lives of endangered animals.



Budi, a **Sumatran orangutan**, has a series of terrifying dreams. Realising that something bad is coming, he leaves his home in search of a new place to live. Share in his adventures as he journeys deeper into the rainforest than he's ever been before.

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