

GECKODAILY CLASSROOM RESOURCES · SPECIES FACT SHEET

Bearded Dragon

Pogona vitticeps

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Suborder	Family	Genus	Species
Animalia	Chordata	Reptilia	Squamata	Iguania	Agamidae	Pogona	P. vitticeps

NATIVE RANGE

Central and eastern Australia

HABITAT

Arid and semi-arid woodland, scrubland and desert edge; often basks on fallen branches, fence posts and rocks

SIZE

40-60 cm (16-24 in) total length, roughly half of it tail

WEIGHT

250-550 g (adult)

LIFESPAN

6-10 years in the wild; commonly 10-15 years in managed care

DIET

Omnivore - insects, leafy greens, flowers and fruit; diet shifts toward more plant matter with age

ACTIVITY PATTERN

Diurnal (active by day) and heliothermic (basks in direct sun to regulate body temperature)

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern (IUCN). Australia has banned export of native wildlife since the 1960s, so animals in the pet trade worldwide are captive-bred.

Reproduction

Oviparous. Females can lay up to 20-30 eggs per clutch and multiple clutches per season; incubation takes roughly 55-80 days.

Notable reproductive biology

Bearded dragons normally determine sex with ZZ/ZW sex chromosomes (similar in principle to birds), but at high incubation temperatures, genetically male (ZZ) embryos can develop as females anyway - a documented case of temperature overriding chromosomal sex determination, and a well-known example in genetics teaching.

Key adaptations

- **The 'beard'.** A pouch of skin under the throat, covered in spiny scales, can be inflated and turned black. It is used in territorial and courtship displays, and the species' common name comes from this feature.
- **Colour change for temperature.** Skin can darken or lighten using pigment cells (chromatophores) to absorb more or less solar heat - a behavioural/physiological adaptation for a diurnal animal that must actively manage its body temperature.
- **Arm-waving display.** A slow, circular waving of one forelimb is a submissive or communicative signal, thought to reduce aggression from a more dominant animal without triggering a chase response.
- **Basking behaviour.** As an ectotherm, a bearded dragon cannot generate its own body heat internally, so it moves between sun and shade through the day to keep its body temperature within an optimal range - a clear, observable example of behavioural thermoregulation.

Did you know?

Bearded dragons can hold their breath for up to two minutes, likely an adaptation to avoid inhaling dust and sand in their arid habitat.

Sources: IUCN Red List; Wikipedia; Animal Diversity Web; Quinn et al. (2007), Nature, on temperature-induced sex reversal in this species. Bold terms are defined in the GeckoDaily Reptile Biology Glossary.