

The Big Book of Nature Facts



2017 Edition

Just the Facts:

Forest: African spurred tortoise, also known as a Sulcata. 20 years old, eats grass, lettuce and occasionally watermelon as a treat. He can feel you touching his shell because it's connected to his spine. He is able to drink water through his feet. He uses the spurs on his legs to dig into the dirt where it's cooler.

Mrs. Piggy/Myrtle: Mrs. Piggy is a yellow bellied slider, Myrtle is a red eared slider. They're basically cousins in the turtle world. The difference between turtles and tortoises is turtles spend most of their life in the water. When it gets really cold they brumate and sit on the bottom of the water for months without coming up for air.

Jericho: African ball python. He is unable to control his body heat so he loves being held by campers when he's cold. The scales on his belly are called scutes. Jericho can eat food that is twice as wide as his head.

Santino: Red tailed boa. Santino is from South America. He is over 6ft long. When he sticks his tongue out he's actually tasting the air to see what is around him. Santino once went six months without eating.

Theodore & Jessie James: Black Tailed Prairie Dog. Theodore has over 65 different barks that he uses to communicate with. Theodore is very shy but loves eating lettuce and seeds. When he stands up tall he is looking for predators like he would do in his burrow in the wild.

Zeus/Veruka: Bearded Dragons. They are native to Australia. They eat veggies and love eating superworms. When they feel scared they puff up their bodies to look big but their spines are soft like rubber

Jim/Pam: Leopard Geckos: Small lizards native to Asia. They love small insects like superworms or crickets. Their tails are used to confuse predators and can detach if they feel threatened or aren't handled properly. They can clean their eyes with their long tongue.

General Turtle Facts:

Turtles can hold their breath underwater while tortoises are typically larger and live almost exclusively on land. Turtles like all reptiles are ectotherms- their internal body temperature is regulated by their external environment. Turtles have their lungs along the top of their shell. The individual sections of a shell are known as scutes.

MISS PIGGIE-Yellow Bellied Slider



The yellow bellied slider turtle is native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, with its range covering diverse habitats. Of all the turtles kept as pets, this turtle is the most well-known and adopted. Healthy well cared for turtles can live as long as 50-70 years. Some turtles love to have their shells gently scratched. Their shells grow from their spines and have nerve endings so they can feel anything touching them. Dandelions (the ones in your yard are good if you don't use pesticides), carrot tops, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, carrots, bell pepper, and squash are good treats. Turtles should eat fruit sparingly.

You will not be able to determine the gender until a turtle is a mature adult. Males will have longer nails and a longer tail than females. Their shells get darker as they get older

FOREST AND TIMONE-African Spurred Tortoise



African spurred tortoises are also known as the Sulcata tortoise. Sulcata means "furrow" in latin, and pertains to the furrows that are found on the tortoise's scales. Unlike most other torti, the African spurred tortoise has claws that allow it to burrow up to 10 feet below the ground to escape the hot mid-day sun. Tortoises are shy animals and instinctively pull into their shells whenever they feel threatened. The action of pulling in its head and front legs compresses the tortoise's lungs, which causes them to exhale suddenly -- that's the hiss you hear. It doesn't necessarily mean that the tortoise is angry.

Turtles need a lot of fiber in their diet, mainly they eat grass and weeds. It's best to avoid giving them a lot of fruit because high amounts of sugar can affect their digestion. Tortoises are prone to overeating so moderating how much they are given is also important.

In the case of sulcata tortoises, they are expected to have a lifespan of about 50 to 150 years. As hatchlings, they are barely 3 inches in length and you might be in

for a surprise as they get older. In average, they can weigh up to 200 lbs and be 24 to 36 inches long. You can also tell the males and females apart by the shape of their shell near their tail. Females have a narrow more pointed tip while males have a broader and more flattened tail section.

ZEUS & VERUCA-Bearded Dragons



Bearded dragons are originally from the desert regions of Australia. In fact, they didn't make their United States debut until the 1990's. If you're wondering whether or not our dragons are Australian, the answer is no. Australia made it illegal to export wildlife in 1960. The bearded dragon got its name from the spikes and scales around its head that resemble a beard, especially when they feel threatened. Bearded dragons generally live to be 12 to 14 years old when well taken care of in captivity, but only 5 to 8 years in the wild. Unlike many of its lizard cousins, the bearded dragon cannot regenerate body parts or detach them when threatened. Usually, bearded dragons are very docile and even seem to enjoy human company. Bearded dragons are not aggressive by nature, even when attacked. There are two typical responses. They will either run away or inflate their abdomen and throat, which are lined with a row of spikes.

If a snake's eyes are cloudy or it looks like it's starting to shed leave it alone. They get grouchy when they're shedding.

JERICHO-African Ball Python

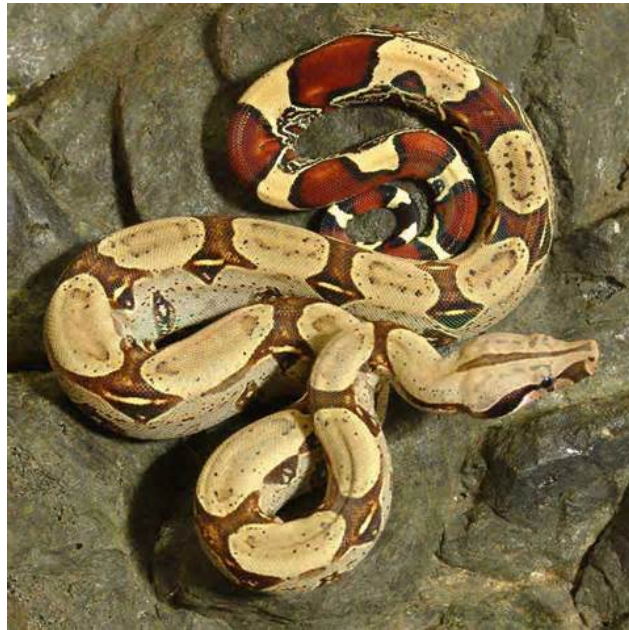


Ball pythons are found at the edges of the forest lands in Central and Western Africa. They live both on the ground and up in trees. These pythons got their name from their nervous habit of curling themselves tightly into a ball with their head sticking out the middle. Ball pythons reach a mature length of around 4 feet with some reaching 5 feet on rare occasions. Like most other pythons and boas, the ball python feeds on a variety of small animals and amphibians. But in the wild, ball pythons do not recognize mice as prey animals and wild caught ball pythons will not consume them. Ball pythons have also been known to go a very long time in between feedings, especially when they are stressed out, sometimes not eating for a year or more. But this is very unhealthy and quite rare for a ball python to go for so long without eating. Ball pythons retain both of their lungs, most snakes only retain the right lung.

Ball Pythons are able to swim and pump air inside their bodies to avoid sinking.

Average lifespan is between 30-50 years.

SANTINO-Red Tailed Boa



Red-tailed boas originate from tropical South and Central America. Though they prefer to live in hot and humid climates, these boas are known to spend the hottest part of the day hidden in logs or in a river to cool off. They have also been known to hang out in low hanging branches in trees. As hatchlings red-tailed boas are 14 to 22 inches long and weigh around 2 ounces. But within the first year they can grow to be 8 feet long! A fully mature red-tailed boa can reach around 10 feet long and weigh in at more than 50 pounds. Despite it's size, a red-tailed boa doesn't eat as often as you might think. Their diet consists of a variety of animals including rats, birds, amphibians, eggs, and small mammals. After consuming a large meal, the red-tailed boa can go for up to a month before having to eat again. Red-tailed boas are constrictors meaning they wrap around their prey and squeeze with

their very muscular bodies. The red-tailed boa can live to be 30 years old. Red-tailed boas like ball pythons have both their lungs instead of just the right lung. Red-tailed boas are also unable to hear.

Theodore & Jessie James-Black Tailed Prairie Dog



Black tailed prairie dogs used to be abundant in the central U.S from Canada to Mexico. They are very social animals that build burrows and tunnel systems for shelter. Prairie dogs have over thirty unique calls that scientists have been able to identify. Primarily they eat grasses, flowers, small seeds and insects. Black tailed prairie dogs are one of the few species of prairie dog that do not hibernate.

I'm working on socializing Theodore, right now he's gotten better at being petted while he is eating. He is very interested in getting away and will bite if you hold him and he decides he doesn't want to be held any longer.

Jim and Pam- Leopard Gecko's

AKA (Fat Tailed Gecko's)



Leopard Gecko's are originally from Asia where they live in desert like environments. Their tails can grow to be half the length of their body and are filled with fat and water. They can detach their tails like other lizards if they need to escape from a predator. Leopard geckos are completely carnivorous and can be seen stalking the small insects that are their prey. Jim and Pam are less than a year old but they could live to be over 10 years old! If Jim and Pam feel like showing off, you might get to see them clean their eyeballs with their tongue!

Facts about Insects

- The number of insect species is believed to be between six and ten million.
- Insect bodies have three parts, the thorax, abdomen and head.
- Insects have two antennae.
- Insects have three pairs of legs.
- Some insects, such as water striders, are able to walk on the surface of water.
- Only male crickets chirp.
- Insects are cold blooded.
- Silkworms are used as the primary producer of silk.
- Most insects hatch from eggs.
- Spiders are not insects.
- Bees are found on every continent except Antarctica.
- Ants leave trails and communicate with each other using pheromones as chemical signals.
- For each human, there are about 1.4 million ants!
- The fastest insect ever recorded flew at 90 mph.

