



## Reptiles

Reptiles are vertebrates with scale or scute-covered skin, they have lungs, and are not born in water. They either have amniotic eggs, or give live birth. The living reptiles are “cold blooded” and they range from about half an inch in length to over one ton in weight. Some scientists consider birds as a subset of the reptiles, but will be treated separately. Reptiles were the dominant class during the

Mesozoic (age of dinosaurs, discussed later). The four main groups of reptiles are:

- Crocodylia (crocodiles, alligators, and gharials)
- Sphenodontia (tuataras from New Zealand)
- Squamata (snakes and lizards), and
- Testudines (turtles, terrapins, and tortoises)

### Crocodylia

Crocodylians include the crocodiles, alligators, caiman, and gharials. Caimans are sometimes considered a subset of the alligators. Crocodylians can be found in semi-tropical and tropical regions worldwide, and are always found around water. Their powerful jaws and thick bodies make them successful river and lake hunters. Alligators have a wide, broad mouth, crocodiles a nearly-triangular mouth, and gharials have a very thin, beak-like mouth. All crocodylians have a four-chambered heart, and are more closely related to birds and dinosaurs than other reptiles. Their rough skin can be used as leather.



An interesting fact is that the gender of the young is determined by egg temperature. At 89° Fahrenheit, the young will become male, while at temperatures lower and higher, the young will develop female. Frequently, crocodylians tend their young.

### Sphenodontia

Tuataras are the only sphenodonts, and there are only two species living. They resemble lizards, but are more closely related to the ancestral species of reptiles. They can live to be over 100 years old.

Tuataras live in New Zealand, and in most ecosystems they have been replaced with lizards. They can lose the tip of the tail when threatened, and reproduce in methods similar to birds.



### Squamata

Squamata are the scaled reptiles, and include snakes and lizards. This also includes the komodo dragon, glass lizards (which are legless, but not snakes), skinks, chameleons, geckos, anoles, worm lizards, Gila monsters, iguanas, and all other scaly reptiles. There are wide varieties of squamata reptiles, and some bear live birth, while some can be venomous. Snakes and lizards are more likely to be found in tropical and semi-tropical regions, but are widespread throughout all the world but polar regions.



### Testudines

Testudines are turtles and their relatives. Turtles are primarily ocean dwelling, while tortoises are land-based. The terrapins are found between the two, especially in swamps. Turtles have flattened shells and flippers, while tortoises have stumpy legs and high-arched shells. Terrapins often have flattened, clawed feet which are often webbed. The shell is a part of the turtle and they cannot leave the shell any more than you could leave your spine. All turtles lay eggs on land. Turtles are among the oldest living reptiles. Like the crocodiles, their gender is based on egg temperature.

