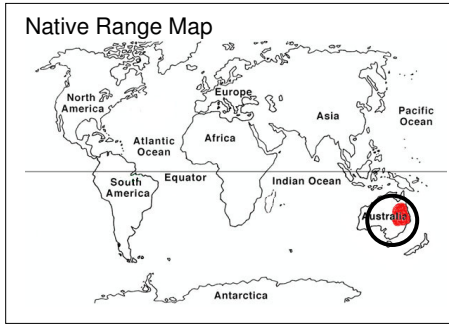


# Inland Bearded Dragon



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Reptilia  
Order: Squamata  
Family: Agamidae  
Genus: *Pogona*  
Species: *vitticeps*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The bearded dragon is native only to Australia, widely distributed throughout the interior of the eastern states to the eastern half of southern Australia and southeastern Northern Territory. They live in a variety of habitats including subtropical woodlands, scrublands, savannas, shore areas, and into great interior deserts.
- **Exhibit Location:** Zoo to You Collection

## Characteristics

- Length: 13-24 inches, including tail; Weight: 283-510 grams (0.6-1.1 pounds)
- Males are generally larger than females.
- Bearded dragons are appropriately named because of their beard, an expandable throat pouch with spiky scales. The beard is for both mating and aggression displays.
- They have a broad, triangular head, round body, stout legs, and a robust tail. Their color depends on the soil of the region they live in, ranging from dull brown to tan with red or gold highlights.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** estimated 4-10 years; **In Captivity** 10 years

## Behaviors

- Adults are territorial. As they grow, they establish social hierarchies in which aggressive and quiet appeasement displays form a normal part of their social interactions.
- Both sexes have beards, but males display more frequently, especially in courtship rituals. The beard turns dark to jet-black and inflates during the display. They may also open their mouths and gape in addition to inflating the beard to appear more intimidating.
- The male will quickly bob his head up and down, often with a darkened beard. He does this to show dominance over smaller males and to females with which he wants to mate.
- Beardies also stand on 3 legs and wave one of its forelimbs in a slow circular pattern. One function of this is for species recognition. It is also used to show submission (a small beardie will arm wave when confronted by a larger, more dominant beardie). Females also arm wave to avoid aggression from males, especially if the male is head bobbing.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** rearrangement of exhibit furniture, daily handling, hibiscus blossoms

## Reproduction

- Bearded dragons reach sexual maturity at 1-2 years of age. Breeding season occurs during the warm Australian summer months of September through March.
- Females dig a burrow and lay up to 24 eggs per clutch and up to 9 clutches per year. They are also known to store sperm and are able to lay many clutches of fertile eggs from one mating.
- Eggs are 0.7-1 inch in length, ellipsoidal (similar to an oval), and are parchment-like to the touch.
- Incubation lasts 50-70 days and is unattended by the parents. Hatchlings are 3-4 inches long when born and are totally independent.

## Diet

- **In the Wild:** plant matter, insects, spiders, small rodents, lizards

- **At the Zoo:** herbs, fruit, steamed yam, crickets, superworms

### **Conservation Status**

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES:** not listed
- Bearded dragons are common in the wild and also as pets around the world.
- Their main predators are snakes and kookaburras.

### **Did You Know?/Fun Facts**

- Since the 1960's, Australia has strictly prohibited exports of any native wildlife.
- Bearded dragons are very popular in the pet trade because of their manageable size and pleasant temperament.
- When alarmed, it opens its mouth, exposing the yellow interior, and inflates its throat pouch and pointed throat scales.
- They are able to survive on nutrients and fat reserves stored in their large abdomens. They use very little energy in search of food.
- During long periods of unfavorable conditions such as when unusually hot or cold, they will dig into the ground and remain dormant (inactive) until conditions improve.
- They can lose part of their tail if bitten off, but they can't detach the tail to avoid predators like some other lizards.

### **Sources:**

- Periat, J. 2000. "Pogona vitticeps" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed October 01, 2005 at [http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Pogona\\_vitticeps.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Pogona_vitticeps.html).
- Smithsonian National Zoological Park: Friends of the National Zoo, (n.d.). Reptiles & amphibians: inland bearded dragon. Retrieved Oct. 01, 2005, from Smithsonian National Zoological Park Web site: [http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/ReptilesAmphibians/Meet\\_the\\_zoos\\_herps/default.cfm?id=20](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/ReptilesAmphibians/Meet_the_zoos_herps/default.cfm?id=20).
- Smithsonian National Zoological Park: Friends of the National Zoo, (n.d.). Reptiles & amphibians: inland bearded dragon. Retrieved Oct. 01, 2005, from Smithsonian National Zoological Park Web site: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/ReptilesAmphibians/Facts/FactSheets/Inlandbeardeddragon.cfm>.