WHAT IS A REPTILE?

Reptiles evolved from amphibian ancestors some 300 million years ago. Reptiles were the first backboned animals that did not have to return to the water to lay their eggs and could live their entire lives on dry land. This was possible because of two natural adaptations - waterproof eggs which can be deposited on land, and tough, scaly skin that prevents reptiles from drying out. Reptiles are ectothermic and must rely on the sun for body heat. This exhibition focuses on four groups of reptiles: turtles, crocodilians, lizards and their closely related cousins, snakes.

ORDER: CHELONIA

Almost 300 species of turtles inhabit land, freshwater and ocean environments worldwide. From its backbone, the turtle’s ribs extend over the shoulders and hips and are covered with bony plates and scutes. This protective “shell” makes turtles unmistakable.

ORDER: CROCODYLIA

Alligators, crocodiles, caimans and the gharial belong to the order Crocodylia. Their flattened tails, webbed toes on the hind feet, and elevated eyes and nostrils are ideal for aquatic life. Keen senses, powerful jaws and stealth make these ancient reptiles efficient predators.

ORDER: SQUAMATA (SUB-ORDER: LACERTILIA)

There are more than 3000 species of lizards ranging in size from two-inch geckos to 10-foot Komodo dragons. Unlike the closely related snakes, most lizards have legs, movable eyelids, and ear openings. They inhabit forests, jungles and deserts throughout the warmer regions of the world.

ORDER: SQUAMATA (SUB-ORDER: SERPENTES)

Snakes also belong to the order Squamata. These stripped-down predators lack legs, movable eyelids and ear openings and are adapted to hunt and kill small animals. There are close to 3000 species of snakes ranging in size from a few inches to over 20 feet in length.
**Turtles & Tortoises**

- **Snake necked Turtle**
  - *Chelodina mccordi*
  - South Eastern Indonesia
  - How does this turtle protect its head?

- **Bearded Dragon**
  - *Pogona vitticeps*
  - Inland Eastern Australia
  - How do bearded dragons avoid a fight?

- **Gila Monster**
  - *Heloderma suspectum*
  - Southwestern U.S.
  - How often does a Gila Monster eat?

- **Soft Shelled Turtle**
  - *Trionyx sp.*
  - North America (Eastern U.S.)
  - What are two things that enable this turtle to stay under water for long periods of time?

- **Star Tortoise**
  - *Geochelone elegans*
  - India
  - Why do land tortoises have high-domed shells?

- **Alligator Snapping Turtle**
  - *Macroclemys temmincki*
  - Southeastern U.S.
  - How does the alligator snapper lure its prey?

- **American Alligator**
  - *Alligator mississippiensis*
  - Southeastern U.S.
  - Most alligator attacks on humans are probably the result of what?

- **Red-sided Garter Snake**
  - *Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*
  - Western Canada to the Great Plains
  - Red-sided garter snakes spend the winter in an inactive state called what?

- **Asian Cobra**
  - *Naja sp.*
  - Southeast Asia
  - What does the cobra eat?

- **Boiga Snakes**
  - *Boiga dendrophila*
  - Southeast Asia
  - Venomous snakes of the family Colubridae have what type of fangs?

- **Crocodylus niloticus**
  - Tropical Africa
  - A crocodile's teeth are designed for what purpose?

- **Crotalus atrox**
  - Southwestern U.S.A.
  - What is a rattlesnake’s rattle made of?

- **Cretosaurus**
  - *Crotalus viridis*
  - New Guinea, Northern Australia
  - This snake lives in what kind of habitat?

- **Crotalus atrox**
  - Southwestern U.S.A.
  - What is the average size of an adult Burmese Python?

**Lizards**

- **Veiled Chameleon**
  - *Chamaeleo calyptratus*
  - Yemen, Saudi Arabia
  - Why do chameleons change their skin color?

- **Bearded Dragon**
  - *Pogona vitticeps*
  - Inland Eastern Australia
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