

DISCOVER  
our AMAZING  
WORLD  
CLIL READERS

# Saltwater Crocodiles

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# Reptiles

## Minimum effort, maximum efficiency

Reptiles are a huge, ancient and diverse group of animals. They evolved over 300 million years ago, and were some of the first animals that lived on land. They existed before birds, mammals and even the dinosaurs.

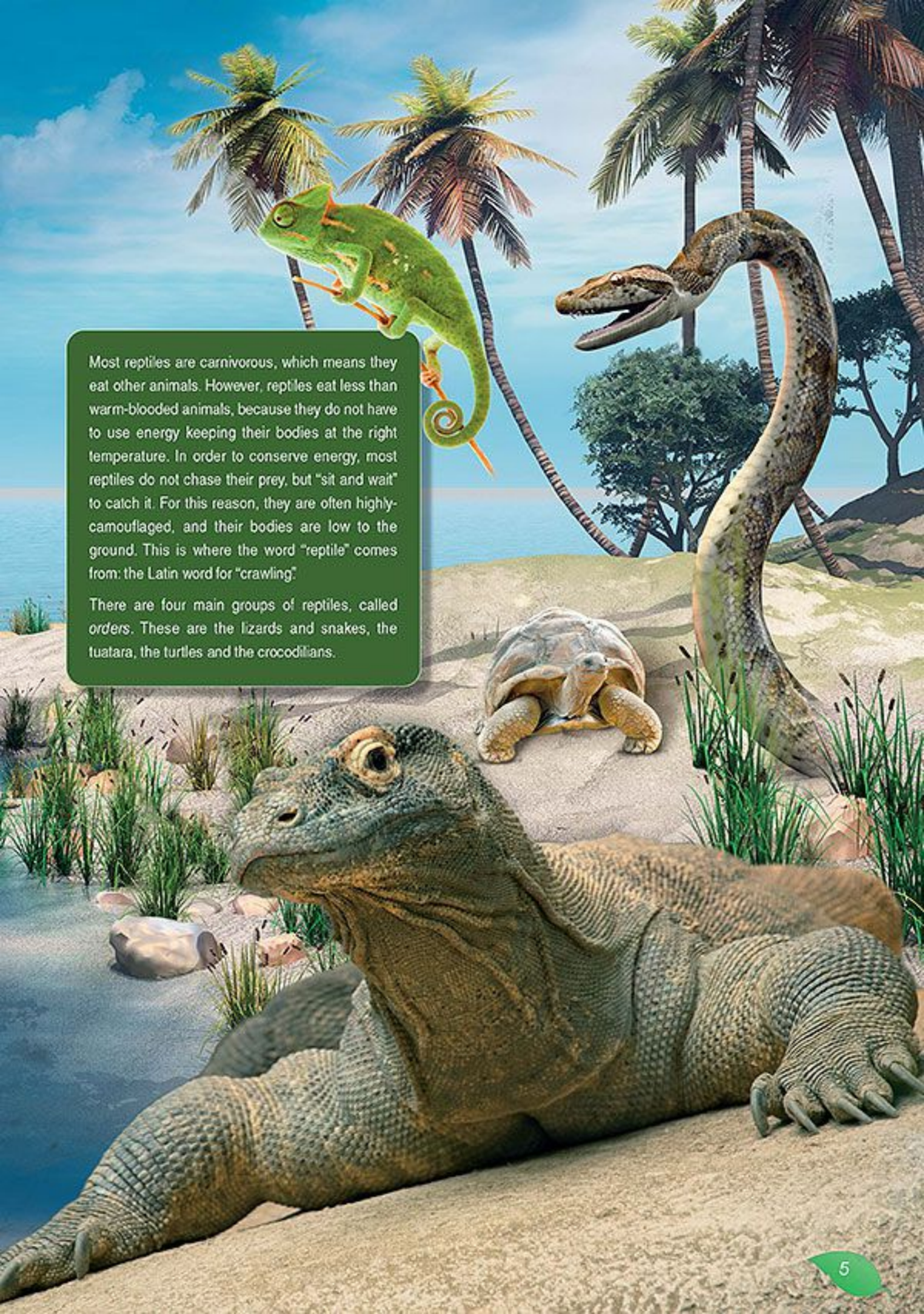


Early reptiles adapted to life on land by developing dry scaly skin to prevent their bodies from drying out. Like their ancestors, reptiles are cold-blooded and rely on the sun to warm their bodies, so they cannot survive in a cold place like Antarctica.



However, they do have an advantage over mammals. Their bodily processes, or metabolism, can work with less food, water, or oxygen. For this reason, reptiles can live in inhospitable places like deserts and aquatic reptiles can stay underwater for a long time without air.

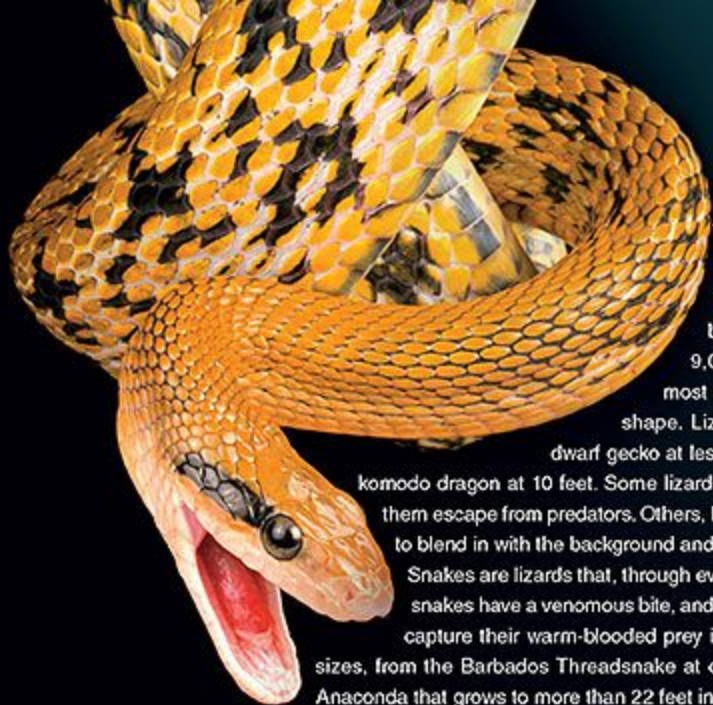




Most reptiles are carnivorous, which means they eat other animals. However, reptiles eat less than warm-blooded animals, because they do not have to use energy keeping their bodies at the right temperature. In order to conserve energy, most reptiles do not chase their prey, but "sit and wait" to catch it. For this reason, they are often highly-camouflaged, and their bodies are low to the ground. This is where the word "reptile" comes from: the Latin word for "crawling".

There are four main groups of reptiles, called *orders*. These are the lizards and snakes, the tuatara, the turtles and the crocodilians.





## Lizards and snakes

Lizards and snakes are by far the biggest group of reptiles, with 9,000 species. They are also the most varied in terms of body size and shape. Lizards range in size from the tiny dwarf gecko at less than an inch long, to the mighty komodo dragon at 10 feet. Some lizards have tails that break off, to help them escape from predators. Others, like chameleons, can change color to blend in with the background and avoid being seen.

Snakes are lizards that, through evolution, have lost their legs. Some snakes have a venomous bite, and heat-sensing organs to detect and capture their warm-blooded prey in the dark. They, too, come in all sizes, from the Barbados Threadsnake at only 4 inches, to the giant Green Anaconda that grows to more than 22 feet in length.



## Tuatara

There are only two species in the Tuatara order, and both are found on small islands off New Zealand. They look like lizards but are quite different. Tuatara are very ancient and mysterious animals. They have a partially-developed third eye in the top of their heads; nobody knows exactly what its purpose is! They grow very slowly until they are 35 years old, and can live over 100 years. They are more resistant to cold than lizards and lead a mostly nocturnal life.

