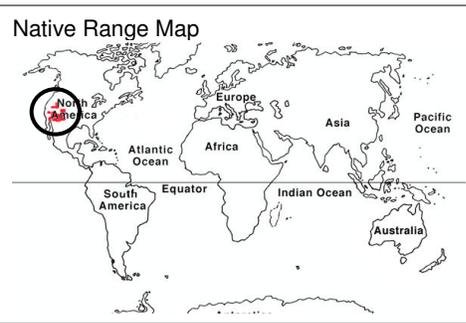


Mojave Black-collared Lizard



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Squamata
Family: Iguanidae
Genus: *Crotaphytus*
Species: *bicinctores*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The Mojave black-collared lizard is found in southeastern and northeastern California, southeastern Oregon, western Idaho, Central and eastern Utah, northern and western Arizona, and major parts of Nevada. It prefers rocky or scattered rock and grassland habitats.
- **Exhibit Location:** USS Antiquities

Characteristics

- Length: 6-13 inches from snout to end of tail
- Black-collared lizards are so-called because of a conspicuous black or black-and-white collar across the back of the neck. They have broad heads, large mouths, and narrow necks. The body is rounded.
- Coloration varies in adult black-collared lizard males, ranging from aqua blue, turquoise or green, to golden yellow, strawberry, and brown. Females tend to be pastel shades of the male.
- All females develop red or orange spotting or lateral body striping just prior to breeding and while gravid (carrying eggs). Juveniles also have these same color markings, but lose them as they reach maturity. This coloration, in females, may act to reduce male aggression. If true, then juveniles may prevent adult males from attacking them.
- Their tails cannot be easily broken due to the lack of fracture planes in their tails as in some other lizards. Rather, they have loose skin at the distal region of the tail (farthest from the center of the tail), allowing the skin to slough (slip) off when grasped.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** Unknown; **In Captivity** Up to 7 years (average 5 years)

Behaviors

- Males exhibit territorial behavior. They will fight and possibly injure each other.
- These lizards are diurnal, being active during the day basking on rocks.
- The long tail of the collared lizard aids bipedal locomotion (movement on 2 legs) by providing a counterbalance while standing on their hind legs. If they lose more than 50% of the tail, they can't run bipedally. This type of movement is usually used to escape from predators.
- Another feature that appears to play a role in avoiding predators is tail coiling. They do this when they take refuge under rocks, lessening their exposure to predators.
- Young collared lizards, when hunting, wag the tip of the tail from side to side as if to get the insect to move. Once the insect twitches, the young lizard rushes in and grabs it. This behavior is lost as they mature and grow.
- This is a timid lizard, but will bite without any provocation and at any opportunity.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** food items, rearrangement of furniture in enclosure

Reproduction

- Black-collared lizards mate in May and June. Eggs are laid April through June in sandy soils, burrows, or under rocks.
- The clutch size is 2-13 eggs, depending on the size and age of the female (5-8 is typical). In a breeding season there can be 2-3 clutches, with a 3-4 week time period between each laying.
- The incubation period is 60-65 days. The hatchlings are 8.9 cm long (3.5 inches).

Diet

- **In the Wild:** insects, smaller lizards
- **At the Zoo:** crickets, wax moth larvae, mealworms

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status** not listed; **CITES** not listed
- The Mojave black-collared lizard is common in its native habitat.
- Predators: birds, larger lizards, coyotes

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Historically, taxonomists recognized 5 species and 7 subspecies of collared lizards. After extensive fieldwork and scientific research, there are 9 recognized distinct species and the subspecies have been eliminated. As more research is conducted, these numbers may change and other species may be described.

Sources:

- Gray, R. (2003). *Desert lizards: captive husbandry and propagation*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.
- Rogner, M. (1997). *Lizards, volume 1*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.