

Komodo Dragon

DOMAIN
Eukaryota

KINGDOM
Animalia

PHYLUM
Chordata

CLASS
Reptilia

ORDER
Squamata

FAMILY
Varanidae

GENUS
Varanus

SPECIES
V. komodoensis

WHERE DO THEY HANGOUT?

Komodo dragons live on the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Flores, Gili Motang, and Padar. They thrive in hot, dry environments such as savannas, tropical forests, and scrublands.



SCALES OF A LEGEND

Komodo dragons are remarkable creatures, reaching up to 10 feet in length and weighing over 150 pounds, making them the largest living lizards. Their scaly, gray to reddish-brown skin helps them blend into rocky, arid landscapes. With muscular bodies, strong legs, sharp claws for digging and hunting, serrated teeth, and venom glands, they are built for survival. Their long, forked tongues "taste" the air, allowing them to detect prey from up to 2.5 miles away.



A FEAST FIT FOR A DRAGON



Komodo dragons, as apex predators, have a varied diet that includes deer, wild boar, water buffalo, and even smaller Komodo dragons.

They also scavenge carrion when available. Using stealth and a venomous bite, they ambush and incapacitate prey. Impressively, they can eat up to 80% of their body weight in one meal, swallowing large chunks whole with the help of flexible jaws capable of handling prey larger than their heads.



Photo by Achmad Ariefiandy via Wikimedia Commons

Extinct
EX EW CR EN VU NT LC
Threatened
Least Concern

SILENT STALKERS, DEADLY STRIKES

Komodo dragons are solitary, spending most of their time hunting or basking. They have a fearsome reputation and are also strong swimmers, capable of traveling between islands. Their camouflage and patience help them stalk prey, launching powerful attacks with muscular tails and strong legs to knock victims off balance before delivering a venomous bite. Their venom prevents blood clotting and causes shock, leading to death. If prey escapes, Komodo dragons use their sharp sense of smell to track it over long distances.

KOMODO DRAGON FAMILIES

Females lay between 15 and 30 eggs, which they bury in the ground to protect from predators. After about eight months of incubation, the hatchlings emerge. These young dragons, measuring about 16 inches long, spend the early years of their lives in trees to avoid predation by larger dragons. Komodo dragons can live up to 30 years in the wild.



THREATS TO THEIR SURVIVAL



Habitat loss



Climate Change



Prey Poaching



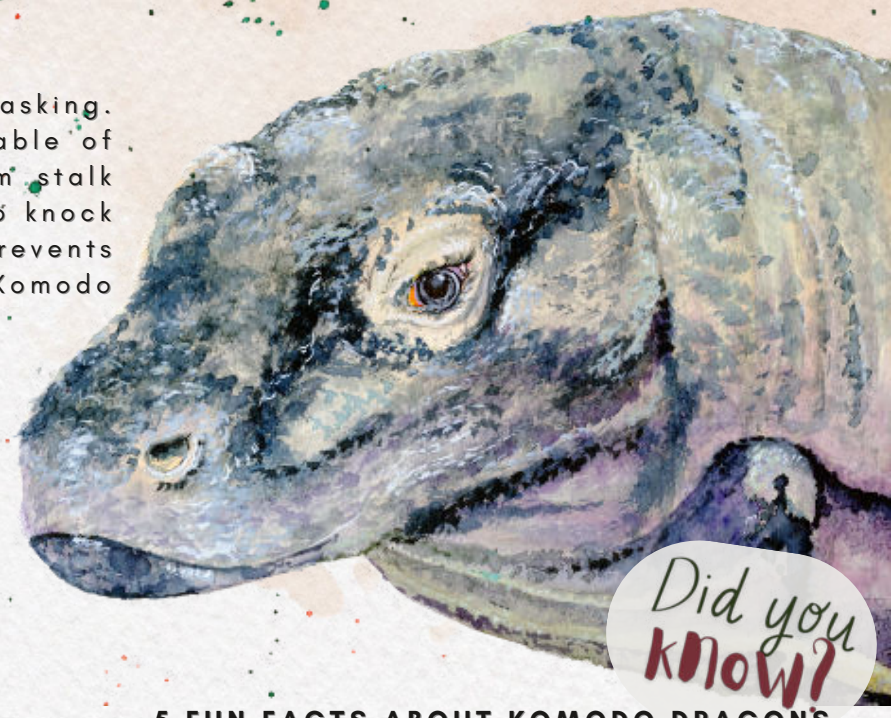
Human-livestock conflict



Despite their dominance in the wild, Komodo dragons face significant threats, including:

- Habitat loss due to deforestation, agriculture, and human settlement.
- Climate change leading to rising sea levels, which threaten their island habitats.
- Poaching of their prey species, particularly deer and wild boar.
- Human conflict as they occasionally prey on livestock.

Currently, Komodo dragons are listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, with fewer than 2,000 individuals left in the wild.



Did you know?

5 FUN FACTS ABOUT KOMODO DRAGONS



Komodo dragons have existed for millions of years, with fossils dating back to the Pliocene epoch (about 4 million years ago).



Their venomous glands produce toxins that cause blood loss, shock, and eventual death in their prey.



They can run at speeds of up to 12 mph in short bursts when chasing prey.



Adult Komodo dragons sometimes prey on their younger counterparts, making cannibalism a common survival threat for hatchlings.



Unlike most predators, Komodo dragons bite and wait for their venom to weaken or kill their prey, often tracking it for hours before consuming it.