



Red Tegu

Salvator rufescens



Tina

I was born on **December 10th, 2018.**

I came to the Racine Zoo on December 10th, 2021. I am one of the zoo's many educational ambassador animals. I currently live off-exhibit behind the scenes, so you can only meet me during educational programs!

TEGUS AT A GLANCE



- Males are larger than the females and grow neck jowls in adulthood.
- Tegus have strong claws to help them dig and find food.

Male:
about 4.5 ft
up to 15 lbs

Female:
about 3 ft
up to 15 lbs

Neck jowl
(Mostly
males only)

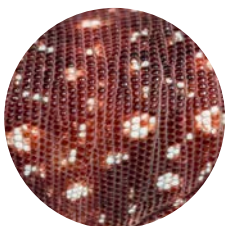


- Their sharp teeth and strong jaws make it easy to bite through and chew through the toughest meat.
- Red tegus use their powerful tail as a whip to attack, when threatened.



Avg. life expectancy in native habitats:
12-15 years

Avg. life expectancy in human care:
15-20 years



- They are typically brownish-green with black stripes across their width and several broken white stripes down their length. They develop red coloration as they mature; males are usually brighter than females.

WHERE ARE NATIVE TEGU HABITATS LOCATED?



The Red Tegu's geographic range includes Western Argentina through Western Paraguay and Eastern Bolivia. Their typical habitat consists of semi-arid deserts, forests, savannas, and fields.

Tegu Behaviors

SLEEPING

Tegus are not highly active lizards. Although they are most active during the daytime, they will choose to spend a majority of their time inside their burrows.

During the winter, I will go into a longer period of sleep called brumation!



SNIFFING

Like all other reptiles, tegus have a special scent organ, called the Jacobson's organ, in the roof of their mouth to help hunt down prey items.

My forked tongue can also help me smell for food items!



BASKING

Basking is a common behavior for most reptiles that are active during the day. The heat from the sun helps warm up their cold-blooded bodies!

I have a nice, warm heat lamp in my habitat that I can bask under to keep my body warm.



HIDING

Tegus are burrowing lizards; they will burrow for a variety of reasons including regulating body temperature and for security.

I like to bury myself underground or sleep in the hides my keepers give me to feel safer!



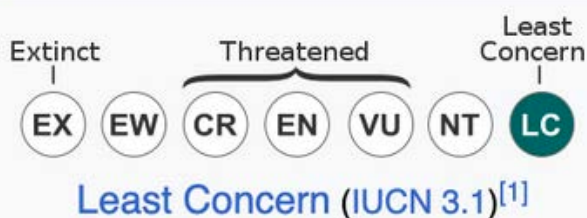
- Red Tegus are terrestrial lizards that rarely climb more than a few feet off the ground. They have the ability to run on their hind legs to escape predation!
- They are excellent swimmers and can dive for upwards of 20 minutes without coming up for air. Some tegus can even tolerate both marine and fresh bodies of water!
- They are highly intelligent. If they are in human care, they can form close bonds with their owners.
- In the wild, they will sometimes destroy bee hives because they like the taste of the honey inside!

Tegu Conservation

Habitat loss, particularly deforestation, is a main threat to the species. Historically, they have been hunted for their meat and skin, or taken from the wild for the pet trade.

Red Tegus are currently listed as **Least Concern**, however, threats like habitat loss and fragmentation could impact future populations of this species.

Conservation status



How can we help?

Tegus are popular in the pet trade, and you should make sure to get your pets from a reputable breeder. Please make sure you are ready to handle a full-grown adult tegu before obtaining one as a pet. Once they grow bigger, some people don't want them anymore and will sell them or release them into the wild. This is dangerous for the tegu and for the native species of the area.