

LITTLE WYOMING

Meet the

LITTLE LIZARDS

01

Picture this:

You're playing in the sagebrush when something small suddenly darts across the path in front of you! You head in that direction to see what it was, and there, peering around a sagebrush, is a little reptile watching you with curiosity. It has a scaly, slender body, a long tail and four legs that help it run fast across the ground. It's a lizard! There are more than 4,700 species of lizards around the world. Nine of those species live here in Wyoming.

02

Ectotherms

Like all other reptiles, lizards are ectotherms, which means that they must use the environment to maintain their body temperature. In the mornings, you may find lizards standing on the open ground or on rocks, soaking in the sun. This is how lizards warm up when they are cold! When lizards get too hot, you may see them retreat into the shade or even burrow into the ground to cool down.

03

Short-horned

The state reptile of Wyoming is a lizard called the greater short-horned lizard. Unlike most lizards, which have a slender body and long tail, horned lizards have a round body and short tail, making them look more like a toad than a lizard. In fact, their scientific name, *Phrynosoma*, means toad-bodied!

04

Diverse diet

All of the lizard species in Wyoming eat insects, but around the world, lizards have a diverse diet. Some lizards, like the Komodo dragon, are carnivores and eat large animals like deer. Some, like the chuckwalla, eat fruit, flowers and leaves. There is even a lizard species—the marine iguana in the Galapagos—which swims in the ocean to feed on algae!

05

Detachable parts

Lizards can detach their tail from their body in order to escape from predators, but that means they are more vulnerable to predators while they wait for their tail to slowly grow back.

When you see a lizard in the wild, it is best to observe it from a distance so that you don't frighten it!



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