



Bearded Dragons! What, Where, How

What, Where, and How

https://youtube.com/watch?v=7xrvS9_Nnf8

https://nerdfighteria.info/v/7xrvS9_Nnf8

===== (00:00) to (02:00) =====

Hi. I'm Jessi and this is Animal Wonders. I love animals and I love sharing everything I know about them so their awesomeness can be better understood by everyone. Bearded dragons are commonly kept as pets, but for being known as a beginner reptile, it's unfortunate that their care is commonly misunderstood. Let's take a closer look at bearded dragons and learn what they are, where they come from, and how we can properly take care of them in captivity.

(Intro)

This is Bindi and he's an adult male. We thought he was a female when he was younger. These guys are awesome but to begin to understand Bindi, we need to unpack all the known information about them. Let's start by classifying him so we can figure out exactly what he is. He's in the kingdom animalia, because he's an animal. Phylum chordata, basically, he has a spine. Class, reptilia, because he's a tetrapod, ectothermic, and he doesn't have an aquatic larval stage. Order, squamata, because he has overlapping scales. Sub-order, iguania, because he's closely related to iguanas and chameleons. Family, agamidae, because his teeth are consolidated with his jawbone instead of being located on the inner rim and his habitat is in the old world as opposed to the new world. This family consists of about 300 species often called dragons and many of them have limited color changing abilities. Genus, pogona, which consists of eight species called bearded dragons. They have spiky scales on their throat which can turn a darker shade in order to communicate, and species vitticeps, or central bearded dragon, found in Central Australia.

Now we know what he is, let's move on to where they come from and this part will help us know how to take care of them in captivity. Research on Australian reptiles is fairly limited compared to reptiles on other continents. Therefore, we're still learning a lot of new information yearly. These guys first show up in written record in 1964 when (?~[1:59](#)) wrote about them in his book *Australian Reptiles*.

===== (02:00) to (04:00) =====

Since then, they have received much more research, so we know their natural habitat and natural behaviors. There are eight species of bearded dragons, each coming from a different area and sometimes their habitats overlap. Today we're focusing on Pogona Vitticeps, which come from Central Australia. The habitat there consists of semi-arid forests, arid forests, and rocky deserts. There, they spend a good amount of time hanging out in the branches of trees or bushes, but they also like to venture down and bask on rocks in the Sun.

If it gets too hot or too cold, they'll burrow under the ground to maintain the right temperature. These guys are opportunistic omnivores, meaning they'll eat anything nearby that fits in their mouth. Grasshoppers, beetles, and other insects are favorites, but they'll also eat bark, leaves, flowers, and fruit. Their natural predators include humans, dingoes, birds of prey, cats, larger lizards, and cars. They mostly depend on their camouflage to keep them safe, often using the freezing method and waiting for the predator to go away. If pursued, they'll run away with their awkward side-legged gait and try and run up a tree or wedge themselves between rocks.

Their belly and back scales all go in one direction, so it's difficult for them to go backwards. See how I can run my hand down his scales, but when I try and go upward, it catches? This helps them from slipping backwards when they're climbing and staying wedged in rocky crevices. These back scales are also really interesting because they can change color depending on the temperature.

They get darker when it's cooler and lighter when it's warmer, and this is gonna help them with thermoregulation.

One of the most fascinating things about bearded dragons is their flamboyant non-verbal communication. Central bearded dragons are not social in the wild, but they will sometimes congregate in popular areas. If they are irritated by another, they will inflate the scales on their throat and turn it a dark shade of black, signalling irritation.

Males are very territorial and they'll combine their blackened beard with a head bob up and down to signal dominance. If they want to be even more intimidating, they'll stand up on their tippy toes, open their mouth in a gape, and hiss. Males that aren't out for a fight will let the dominant male know by taking their front arm and waving it in submission.

===== (04:00) to (06:00) =====

Females will do the same arm waving if they accept a male that's doing courtship behaviors. During the courtship, the male will bob his head up and down rapidly, putting on a great display of robust health. If a female is not receptive, she'll bob her head back, blacken her throat, and block any attempts with body positioning.

(?~[4:23](#)) like Bindi, are very prominent and robust in the wild. It's illegal to export these guys from Australia and it's likely that all of those currently in captivity originated from a few that were smuggled out in the 1960s, which is how these guys ended up as pets in homes across the world. So now that we've got a good understanding about these guys' natural history, let's learn how we can provide them a happy and healthy life in captivity.

First off, we'll need to start with giving them a large enough space so they can do all their natural activities while also simulating their natural environment. For babies, you can use a 10-20 gallon tank but as they grow, you'll need to increase their size to at least 60 gallons. Most people use a glass aquarium or plastic (?~[5:01](#)). We've chosen to repurpose a big box store's plastic aquatic tank that I think used to house baby turtles. It's 48 inches long, 16 inches deep, and 16 inches tall.

To simulate their natural environment, you'll first need to get the right temperature. You'll need an undertank heater or an overhead heat lamp to get the normal temperature 78-88 degrees Fahrenheit. You'll also need a basking light that reaches temperatures of 95-100 degrees Fahrenheit. At night, the basking light should be turned off and the ambient temperature should remain in the 70s. If you're using an overhead light as your only source of heat, you're gonna need another heat lamp for the nighttime that's either ceramic or holds a night bulb that produces minimal blue light. Having a daytime light on 24 hours will impede their ability to sleep, leading to stress, poor appetite, and eventual death. Try to position the UV bulb as close to the basking light as you can, so they can get both at the same time. We've arranged a basking platform so she can climb up and get fairly close to her heat source. We also have a shelf right there underneath her UV so she can climb up there if she wants.

===== (06:00) to (08:00) =====

Alright, next thing is substrate, what you're going to put on the bottom of the enclosure. Most pet stores are going to recommend (?~[6:06](#)) sand, because bearded dragons are considered desert animals, and while this is partially true, they don't spend all of their time on the sand. The problem with sand and other loose substrates like gravel, rabbit pellets, and wood shavings is that bearded dragons have sticky tongues. They love to taste-test their environment like going around and licking things, and



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when they hunt down their prey, they'll often consume materials around them. This can lead to irritation in their GI tract, impaction, and death.

Over the years, we've used several substrates that are safe and easy to clean. For babies, I would recommend paper towels. It's not that pretty, but young bearded dragons can easily become impacted and with paper towels, there's no loose substrate and clean up is super quick. As they get older, you can use reptile carpet, ceramic tiles, newspaper, or rocks. Bindi is about five years old, and we're trying out some new substrates to give her some variety. So far, Bindi prefers to perch on her rocks or lounge in the corner on her clay mound.

Alright, the next feature you'll need to add is a source of water. In the wild, bearded dragons don't drink much water at all, but in captivity, they can't regularly search out water if they need it, so it's a good idea to provide some just in case. We use a small water dish in the corner, but you can also use a dripper or you can gently mist them on the nose and let them lick it off if they're thirsty.

To keep them well-fed, you'll need to offer them a variety of foods just like they would find in the wild. As babies, they'll mostly eat small crickets. Keep in mind that they can't eat a food item larger than the width between their eyes. As they grow up and become juveniles, they'll begin to eat vegetation as well. Offer a salad of fresh greens and veggies several times a week. I recommend chopped red leaf lettuce with a sprinkle of yam, carrot, or squash on top. As an adult, Bindi gets salad Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The other four days, she gets a meat product. Mealworms, crickets, or cockroaches. Don't offer too many mealworms or cockroaches because their exoskeletons can cause impaction.

Bearded dragons usually aren't very social with their own species but they can enjoy human interaction and they're quite smart. They can recognize faces and recent studies have revealed that they can learn by observation. There's so much more that we can learn about bearded dragons.

===== (08:00) to (08:39) =====

There's links below on some interesting studies and I'm keeping my ears open for any new research on these guys.

Thanks for joining me today. By learning about what these guys are and where they come from, we can know how to take care of them in captivity. If you'd like to help support animal education, you can go to our Patreon page, patreon.com/animalwonders and become a monthly donor, and if you'd like to go on an adventure with us every week, subscribe to our YouTube channel [AnimalWondersMontana](#). Thanks guys.

(Endscreen/Credits)

Sandy the sand boa and Pearl the Colombian tegu were the first rescues that we took in that we didn't consider pets. We had quite a few reptiles in the beginning because we were still renting a room and they're easiest to house.