

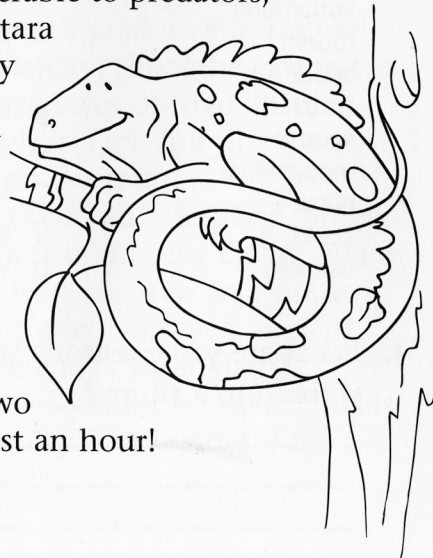
Some animals have the same basic form as their ancestors from millions of years ago. Scientists call them “living fossils.” Cockroaches, crocodiles, and horseshoe crabs are living fossils. But one of the strangest living fossils lives only on islands off the coast of New Zealand. It is called the tuatara.

The tuatara looks like a member of the lizard family, but it is not. One strange difference is the tuatara’s eyes—it has three of them! The third eye is in the middle of its forehead, right above the brain. In a young tuatara, the eye is covered by a transparent scale. Through it, the tuatara can sense light and dark even when its other two eyes are closed. As the tuatara grows older, the third eye is gradually covered with skin and is no longer used.

Sometimes life for a tuatara seems to go in slow motion. It can take twenty years for a young tuatara to become an adult. This is the slowest growth rate of any reptile. Mating also takes a long time. A male tuatara can mate about once a year, and a female is fertile only every three or four years. Once a female has mated, she lays about a dozen leathery eggs in a hole and then abandons them. The eggs stay in the soil for more than a year. Male babies often come from warmer soil, and female babies from cooler soil.

When they are ready, the four- to five-inch-long baby tuataras break out of their eggs by using a spike on the tip of their snout called an egg tooth. Then they dig their way to the surface. For the first few weeks they are very vulnerable to predators, including adult tuataras. If a baby tuatara survives, it can keep growing for thirty years. It can grow to be two feet long and live for up to 100 years. The only reptile to live longer is the turtle.

Tuataras can use being slow to their advantage. With a slow metabolism, a tuatara can get by with only a couple of meals in a month. It can also change its body temperature, slow its heartbeat to one beat every two minutes, and hold its breath for almost an hour!



- Which statements are true based on the second paragraph?
  - Tuataras have three eyes.
  - Tuataras are lizards.
  - Tuataras never sleep.
  - Tuataras grow more eyes as they get older.
- Which statements are true based on the third paragraph?
  - Tuatara egg shells are like leather.
  - Tuataras live longer than turtles.
  - Sometimes tuataras are cannibals.
  - Tuataras can take about as long as human beings to get to full size.
- Complete each sentence with the correct word from the list.
  - Without any shade, we were \_\_\_\_\_ to the sun’s rays.
  - When they broke open the rock, they found a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - She could see outside through the \_\_\_\_\_ curtains.
  - We had to \_\_\_\_\_ the house when the river rose.
- Kids usually have a high rate of metabolism. What are some advantages and some disadvantages of a high rate of metabolism? \_\_\_\_\_

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|----------------|
| 1. fossil      |
| 2. transparent |
| 3. abandon     |
| 4. vulnerable  |

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