



# Mystery Dragons

## Audience

Activity is designed for 8 years old and up.

## Goal

Students will learn about different lizard species native to Asia.

## Objectives

- To compare 3 different species of lizards.
- To identify species based on given information.

## Conservation Message

Asia is the largest and most populated continent. It is in the Eastern and Northern Hemispheres and covers 9% of the Earth's total surface area. Asia has extremely diverse climates, geographic features, animals, and plants. Unfortunately, the unique biodiversity of Asia is under threat because of habitat loss and overexploitation of species. You can help mitigate these threats by supporting local zoos and aquariums that participate in species survival plans and other conservation efforts.

## Background Information

Asia is home to many species of reptiles that span the continent. Reptiles are animals that are characterized by scales, backbones, and are ectothermic. Ectothermic means that they can't produce their own body heat and rely on the outside environment to keep them warm. This is why you will find many reptiles basking in the sun. The reptiles in Asia range from brightly colored snakes, elaborate shelled turtles and tortoises and uniquely different lizards.

Asia has a long history with dragons, and they have been associated with the Emperor of China and the Ming and Qing Dynasty. While the history books speak of mythical flying creatures that breathe fire, Asia is home to three interesting species of real life dragons: the gliding Draco lizard (also known as the Flying dragon), the Komodo dragon and the Chinese water dragon.

Draco Lizard: The Draco lizard is native to the jungles of Southeast Asia and has some unique adaptations for escaping danger, attracting mates, and finding meals. Flying dragons have elongated ribs that they can extend and retract. Between each of

these ribs are folds of skin that rest against the body when the dragon is relaxed. If the lizard needs to escape danger it extends the ribs and folds of skin and jumps into the air; the flaps now resemble wings! These flaps catch the wind and allow the dragon to glide from one branch to another or even to the ground. They use their long slender tails like a rudder to steer and can glide for up to 30 feet.

Komodo Dragon: Komodo dragons are the largest lizard species on the planet, reaching up to 10 feet in length and weighing anywhere from 170-200 pounds. The largest Komodo dragon ever recorded was over 300 pounds. They have long flat heads with rounded snouts and bowed legs. Their tails are huge and contain hundreds of muscles. Komodo dragons are native to Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands and thrive in harsh climates. They can walk up to seven miles per day but generally do not venture far from where they hatched. They are a dominant predator and eat anything from deer and pigs to large water buffalo and even carrion (dead animals). They are ambush predators meaning they will lay in wait until unsuspecting prey gets a little too close. They will then spring into action, using its sharp claws and serrated shark-like teeth to capture its prey. These dragons also have venom glands that contain a toxin that lowers blood pressure, causes massive bleeding by preventing clotting and induces shock.

Chinese Water Dragon: These dragons are native to China and mainland Southeast Asia. They can grow up to 3.5 ft and live up to 15 years. They are mostly found in trees along bodies of freshwater including lakes and streams. These dragons are considered diurnal, which means they are most active during the day. If threatened they will drop from the trees, landing in the water and swim to safety or stay submerged for up to 90 minutes. Chinese water dragons eat primarily vegetation however, they will eat insects and occasionally small fish and mammals.

### **Materials Needed**

- Mystery Dragons Sheet (provided)
- Pen/pencil

### **Length of Activity**

10 minutes

### **Procedures**

- After reading the background information look at the Mystery Dragons sheet.
- Determine which dragon each riddle is referring to and write your answers in the box under the riddle.
- Check the answer sheet and see if you were correct.



# Mystery Dragons

## Dragon X

- It has a small head with a blunt short nose.
- This dragon primarily feeds on plants, insects, and sometimes small fish.
- This dragon is primarily active during the daytime.
- They can hold their breath for up to 1.5 hours.

What am I?

## Dragon Y

- This dragon has a long, flat head with a rounded snout.
- It has 60 serrated teeth that can measure up to 1 inch in length.
- It has venom glands.
- This dragon has a long, yellow, deeply forked tongue.
- It can weigh 170-200 pounds.

What am I?

## Dragon Z

- This dragon has a long slender tail that can be used as a rudder.
- This dragon has special traits that give it wings.
- It only reaches about 8 inches long, including tail.
- They have flattened bodies.
- They eat primarily ants and termites.

What am I?



# Mystery Dragons Answer Sheet



**Dragon X- Chinese Water Dragon**



**Dragon Y- Komodo Dragon**



**Dragon Z- Draco Lizard (Flying Dragon)**