

**Northern**  
**Caiman Lizard**  
*Dracaena guianensis*



**Physical Characteristics**

- This reptile is a large, heavy-bodied lizard.
- Coloration: body that is olive to bright green in color with a red or orange colored head. The thick tail is brownish to black and may have yellow stripes.
- As adults, these lizards display some degree of sexual dimorphism as the male has a broader head that is brighter red in color than the female's head.
- Covered in large, bony scales the skin of a Caiman lizard resembles that of a Caiman- a crocodylian species that also inhabits Central and South America. While its appearance and semi-aquatic lifestyle may suggest that that the caiman lizard is related to these crocodylians, it is actually a cousin of the Tegu and is just as well equipped for life on land and in the trees as it is for in the water.

**Size**

- Length: 2-4 feet
- Weight: 8-10 pounds

**Lifespan**

- Wild: unknown
- Zoos: 10 years or longer

**Behaviors**

- Diurnal; terrestrial
- The Northern Caiman Lizard has been known to feed on snails. The lizard crushes the shell with its strong teeth and releases the fragments with its tongue.
- It also forages for arboreal invertebrates, eggs and other small animal prey.

**Diet**

- Wild: Aquatic Snails, crawfish, freshwater clams, turtles
- Zoo: wet exotic canid food, fish, shrimp, mussels

**Reproduction**

- This species reproduces sexually, and females lay five to seven fertilized eggs per clutch, with an incubation period of about 179 days. They lay their eggs in holes in the riverbank, which they then cover. Hatchlings are born independent, requiring no prenatal care.

**Habitat and Range**

- Habitat: This is a semi-aquatic lizard, is found in seasonally flooded lowlands, swamps, and edges of rivers and streams, found either in the water, on the ground, or on branches of low trees.
- Range: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru

**Conservation**

- IUCN Status: Least Concern
- Threats: Hunting for its meat, the pet trade, and skin for the leather market may represent a localized threat to this species



### **Classification**

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Reptilia
- Order: Squamata
- Family: Teiidae
- Genus: *Dracaena*
- Species: *D. guianensis*

### **Interesting Facts**

- Like other lizards, caiman lizards are able to lose and regrow its tail if attacked by a predator.
- This semiaquatic species spends part of its time in the water. A third, clear eyelid acts like a goggle when submerged.
- Caiman lizards are excellent climbers.