

Horned Lizards

One of the strangest-looking animals is a reptile called the horned lizard. They sometimes are called horned toads, horned frog, or horny toads. But they are not part of the frog or toad families. They can be from 2 ½ inches to 6 inches long, and live in the desert and other dry places in North and Central America



Horned lizards eat insects. They really like eating ants, but they also eat grasshoppers, beetles, and spiders.

These lizards have to stay away from animals like hawks, snakes, dogs, wolves, and coyotes because these animals will eat them. If a horned lizard does meet one of these animals, he has some built-in protection.

First, horned lizards are different colors. They can be reddish-brown, gray or yellowish to match their environment. This makes it harder for their enemies to see them.

Horned lizards have many strong horns on their heads. They have many spines on their backs. The lizard's spines and horns can keep him protected. When a horned lizard is frightened, he blows his body up to look like a spiny balloon to scare away dangerous animals. If this doesn't work, he can shoot blood from his eyes up to three feet away! He does this to surprise the other animal and try to make a quick get-away. The blood he shoots from his eyes is harmful to dogs, wolves, and coyotes.

Horned lizards are having a hard time surviving now. They have less food because humans kill ants. People are building in the deserts where horned lizards live, taking away their homes. And, some people take horned lizards to keep as pets. That means the lizards can't mate and have babies in the wild.