



# CARING FOR MY NEW BEARDED DRAGON

John Bankston




# Mitchell Lane

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Words in **bold** throughout can be found in the Glossary.



# Real-Life Dragons

Not all dragons are scary. In movies, dragons are huge and fierce. In real life, there's a dragon that's tiny. It's usually gentle. Sometimes it's shy. Bearded dragons only look like the monsters in story books.

Raising a bearded dragon isn't easy. People have had pet cats and dogs for thousands of years. They are **domesticated**. Dogs are better behaved than wolves. Pet bearded dragons act like their wild cousins.





It's important to read books like this one before bringing home a bearded dragon. You'll need to learn its **habits**. Your pet bearded dragon will need your help to keep warm. You'll have to give it regular baths and feed it live insects. People who have pet bearded dragons call them "beardies." They say beardies are better first pets for kids than cats or dogs. Keep reading to find out why.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

When bearded dragons are young, it's very hard to tell the boys from the girls.

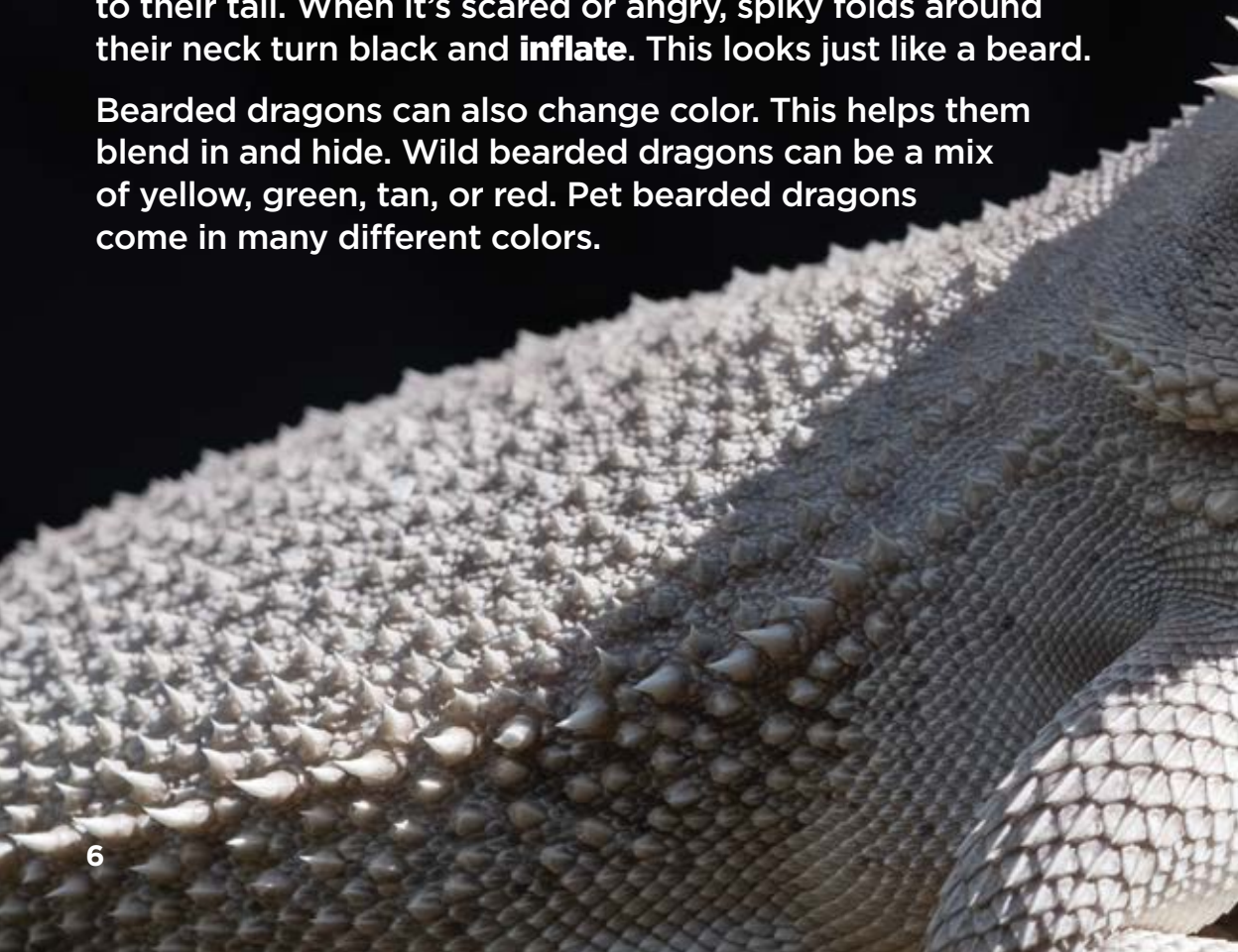
# Bearded Dragon Info

Wild bearded dragons can only be found in Australia. There are eight different **species**. Four of them make good pets. They like dry places and climbing trees. They can be found in deserts, forests, or along the beach. They like being high up to watch for **predators**. They also enjoy **basking**. Wild bearded dragons are often found atop fence posts.

You should never pick up or bring home a wild animal. There are lots of places to buy a bearded dragon. Some adult bearded dragons are almost two feet long (60 centimeters.) Most weigh between one to two pounds (900 grams).

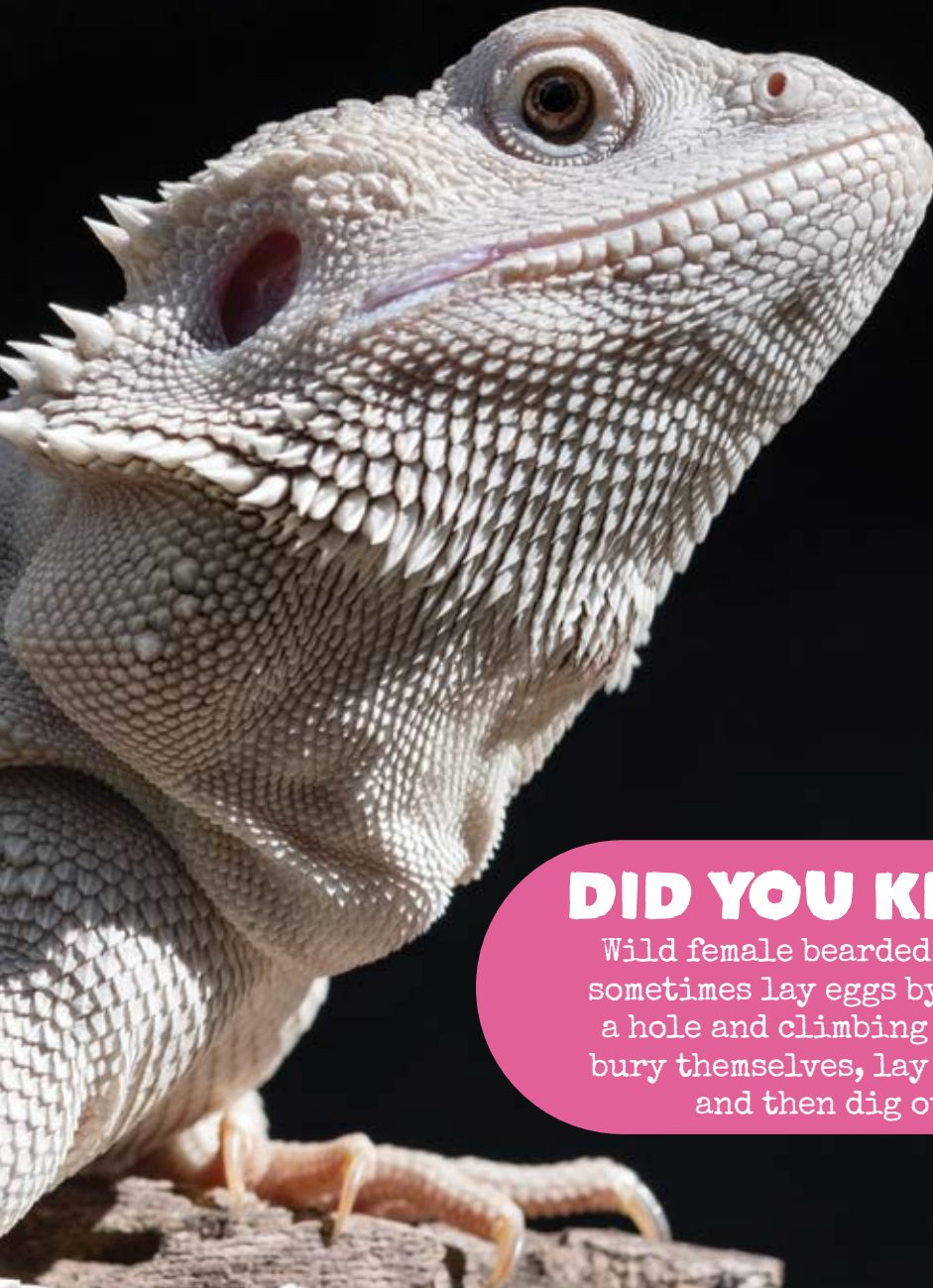
They have flat, plump bodies. Their heads are shaped like triangles. Sharp spikes run along their sides from their head to their tail. When it's scared or angry, spiky folds around their neck turn black and **inflate**. This looks just like a beard.

Bearded dragons can also change color. This helps them blend in and hide. Wild bearded dragons can be a mix of yellow, green, tan, or red. Pet bearded dragons come in many different colors.



Bearded dragons are reptiles. That means they lay eggs. It also means they are cold-blooded. They need the sun to keep warm. All reptiles hate the cold.

Pet beardies are usually central bearded dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*) from southeastern Australia. It's the biggest and the calmest beardie.



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Wild female bearded dragons sometimes lay eggs by digging a hole and climbing in. They bury themselves, lay the eggs, and then dig out.

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