

Colorado's Colorful Collared Lizards

Collared lizards live in the rocky, hilly areas in southeastern and southwestern Colorado. The collared lizard gets its name because the two black bands on its neck look like a collar. It is a beautiful lizard, and ranges in color from bright turquoise to greenish brown. They often have yellow bands across their backs and all adults have bright yellow toes. Males usually have very large heads and have yellow or orange throats. During the breeding season, females have bright orange-red bars or spots on the sides of their bodies.

People often see this colorful lizard climbing and basking on rocks and boulders. From these perches, they keep a lookout for their prey. Collared lizards have powerful jaws and can kill and eat smaller lizards, beetles, grasshoppers, and other insects.

Male collared lizards are very territorial. A male will fight any other male in its presence. When a female is nearby, a male will try to kill the other male to win the female over. Collared lizards of both sexes are aggressive when cornered, and will either bite, or show their intent to bite by gaping at the attacker.

Unlike many lizards, the collared lizard cannot grow a new tail if its old one is broken off. They are also one of the few lizards which are able to run on their two hind legs only. They can run very quickly, and are able to reach speeds of up to 16 miles per hour. When they run on their hind legs, holding their bodies off the ground at a 45-degree angle with tail and forelimbs raised, collared lizards have the appearance of small dinosaurs—colorful, miniature T-Rexes.

