

Komodo Dragon

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In news : A recent study finds that the Komodo dragon, the world's largest lizard, could become extinct in the next few decades due to climate change

Key findings

- The study conducted by the University of Adelaide and Deakin University, both in Australia states that the Komodo Dragon could become extinct in the next few decades due to climate change unless measures are taken to change the status quo
- the study used models to predict that the dragon could become extinct on three of the five island habitats where it is currently found
- According to it, climate change was likely to cause a sharp decline in the availability of habitat for Komodo dragons, reducing their populations, according to the authors of the study.

About the Komodo Dragon

- The Komodo dragon, also known as the Komodo monitor, is a species of lizard found in the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Flores, and Gili Motang.
- A member of the monitor lizard family Varanidae, it is the largest extant species of lizard, growing to a maximum length of 3 metres (10 ft) in rare cases and weighing up to approximately 70 kilograms (150 lb).
- **Scientific Name:** Varanus komodoensis
- **Type:** Reptiles
- **Diet:** Carnivore
- **Average LifeSpan in the Wild:** Up to 30 years
- They have long, flat heads with rounded snouts, scaly skin, bowed legs, and huge, muscular tails.

- **Habitat:**

- Komodo dragons have thrived in the harsh climate of Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands for millions of years.
- They prefer the islands' tropical forests but can be found across the islands.
- Though these athletic reptiles can walk up to seven miles per day, they prefer to stay close to home rarely venturing far from the valleys in which they hatched.

- **Reproduction:**

- Once a year, when they're ready to mate, female Komodo dragons give off a scent in their feces for males to follow.
- When a male dragon locates a female, he scratches her back and licks her body. If she licks him back, they mate.
- Males also sometimes wrestle one another to earn mating rights.
- Pregnant females then lay about 30 eggs, which they bury in the earth until they hatch eight months later

- **Unique reproduction(a sexual):**

- When there aren't any males around, female Komodo dragons have other means of reproducing: As they have both male and female sex chromosomes, female dragons can reproduce asexually in a process called parthenogenesis

- **Threats to survival:**

- While asexual reproduction does allow female Komodo dragons to replenish their population an evolutionary advantage it has a significant drawback: This reproduction process only results in sons.
- The dearth of other females within a population

has led to evidence of inbreeding.

- The reptile's reluctance to stray far from home exacerbates the issue as the species' population declines and fragments.
 - Humans have also posed a threat to the Komodo dragon's survival.
 - People have burned the Komodo dragon's habitat to clear it for other uses, while poachers target this reptile and its prey.
- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable