

Horned lizard

Built like miniature armored tanks, horned lizards move ponderously along the baking ground of their dry desert habitats; stopping to sunbathe, dig burrows, and snack on ants. They have evolved a range of adaptations to help them survive.





5½ in (14 cm)



Found in northern Mexico and southwestern US

Bloody **DEFENSE**

Horned lizards use the spines on their backs in self-defense. In addition, they also exhibit a startling form of defense. A network of weakened blood vessels allow them to spray a stream of blood out from their eyes toward attackers. This blood tastes horrible to potential predators.



Dew **DRINK**

Living in dry, desert conditions, horned lizards have evolved to get as much water from their environment as possible. The tiny grooves between the lizard's scales channel moisture from dew that has gathered on its body toward the lizard's mouth, providing a refreshing morning drink.



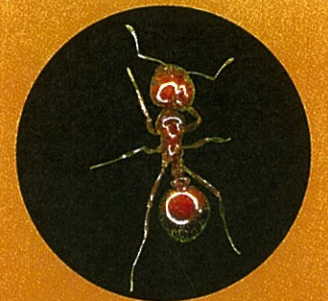
Body **BEAUTIFUL**

Another adaptation to its desert environment, is the horned lizard's wide, flat body. This allows it to catch rainwater during infrequent desert showers. The lizard raises its tail and channels droplets down to its mouth. Its bumpy, mottled appearance helps it blend into its surroundings and avoid detection by predators flying above.



Sticky **TONGUES**

This ant contain lots of chitin, which is indigestible to a horned lizard. That means the lizard must eat an awful lot of ants to get enough nutrients to survive. Thankfully, the lizard has a secret weapon—a long sticky tongue, which it flicks out like a whip to gather lots of ants.



Horny **HEADS**

The lizards are named for their distinctive horns. These shapes break up the outline of the lizards' heads—making them harder to spot in among the rocks and stones of the desert. Their raised brow bumps help to shield their eyes from the strong desert sun, while thick eyelids protect their eyes from stings of their ant prey.

