MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

ALDABRA GIANT TORTOISE

Aldabrachelys gigantea

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · **© 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Reptile (tortoise)
NATIVE REGION	Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles
HABITAT	Grassland, scrub, mangrove and coast
DIET	Grasses, herbs and fallen leaves
SHELL LENGTH	Males up to 4 ft; females smaller
WEIGHT	Males about 550 lb; females smaller
LIFESPAN	More than 100 years
STATUS	Vulnerable
OUR TORTOISES	Ally, Groot, Homer and Marge



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- About 152,000 giant tortoises live on Aldabra, the largest population in the world.
- A group of tortoises is sometimes called a creep.
- Wallowing in mud helps protect tortoises from mosquitoes.
- A hatchling is only about 3 inches long.
- A tortoise's shell is fused to its ribs and spine.

Words to know

Atoll: A ring of coral islands around a shallow lagoon.
Ecosystem engineer: An animal that changes its habitat in ways that affect other living things.
Herbivore: An animal that eats only plants.
Vulnerable: At risk of becoming endangered.

Think about it

1. Where is Aldabra, and what kind of place is it?
2. How do tortoises keep cool during the hot middle of the day?
3. What is "tortoise turf," and how do tortoises make it?
4. Are Aldabra and Galápagos tortoises the same species? Explain.
5. How many years does a tortoise live before it begins to breed?

Draw it

Draw an Aldabra giant tortoise grazing. Label its domed shell, long neck and column-like legs.

STANDARDS · GRADES K–3 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS4-3 · 3-LS1-1 · K-ESS2-2**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.G · 3.1.3.A · 3.3.K.B**

Draw here

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/aldabra-giant-tortoise/ · **Sources:** UNESCO World Heritage Centre; Walton et al., Biodiversity and Conservation (2019); The Orianne Society; Nature Seychelles; Smithsonian Magazine; Smithsonian's National Zoo (mud-wallow note).
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G) · 3-LS1-1 (3.1.3.A) · K-ESS2-2 (3.3.K.B)
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ALDABRA GIANT TORTOISE

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the Aldabra giant tortoise live?

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Atoll ☐ Ecosystem engineer ☐ Herbivore ☐ Vulnerable

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the Aldabra giant tortoise.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Grasses, herbs and fallen leaves. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• How do tortoises keep cool during the hot middle of the day?

_____

• What is “tortoise turf,” and how do tortoises make it?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/aldabra-giant-tortoise/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

Grades K–3 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS4-3 · 3-LS1-1 · K-ESS2-2** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.G · 3.1.3.A · 3.3.K.B**

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