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- Water

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Climate Change May Lead to Extinction of Lizards

According to a new study, dozens of lizard species could become extinct within 50 years because of global climate change.

• Mar 08, 2013

It has previously been discovered that lizards with viviparous reproduction (embryo retention inside the mother's body), are threatened by the effects of climate change. [A new study](#) suggests that this type of reproduction method could eventually lead to the extinction of several species of lizards within a 50-year period.

Dr. Daniel Pincheira-Donoso, from the School of Life Sciences at the University of Lincoln (UK), and other researchers investigated the hypothesis of historical invasions of cold climates by Liolaemus lizards, which is one of the most diverse groups of vertebrates on earth. Once these species evolve to viviparity, the process is most likely irreversible and the lizards will have to remain in cold climates.

"Lizards' reproduction is largely linked to climatic temperatures and viviparous species are usually found in cold environments. When reptiles initially moved to colder areas they needed to evolve emergency measures to succeed in these harsh places, and we believe viviparity is one of these key measures, said Pincheira-Donoso. "However, this transition is mostly one-directional and unlikely to be reversed. Rapid changes in the environment's temperature would demand rapid re-adaptations to secure the species' survival. Through the research we found that over the next 50 years nearly half of the area where these species occur may disappear, causing multiple extinctions due to climate change."

The conclusion of the study is that even though viviparity allowed lizards to live in cold environments, as a consequence of that evolution, viviparous lizards will now face extinction in the next few decades.

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