

Tuatara

Sphenodon punctatus



Otago Regional Council



Conservation status

Regional | Conservation Translocation
National | At Risk: Relict



Main threats

Introduced mammalian predators (e.g. rodents)
Warming temperatures and rising sea levels

Get to know me...



The sex of hatchlings depends on how warm the buried eggs get (higher temperatures increase the likelihood of males being born).

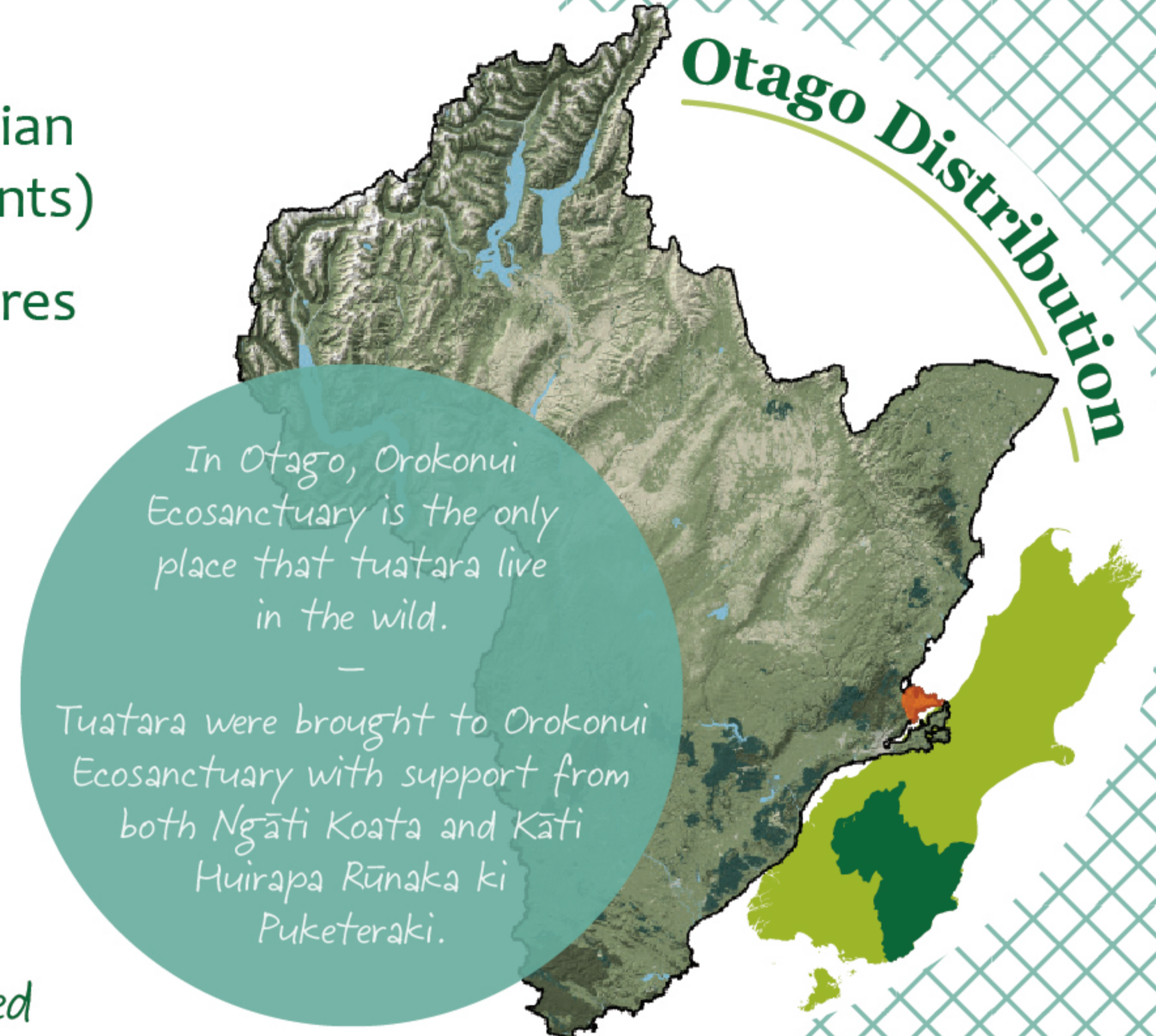


To tear up my food, I slide the single row of teeth in my lower jaw between the two rows in my upper jaw (kind of like using a steak knife).



Body length (excluding tail):
Up to 280 mm

Tuatara are named for their spines: "tua" means "back" and "tara" means "spiny"

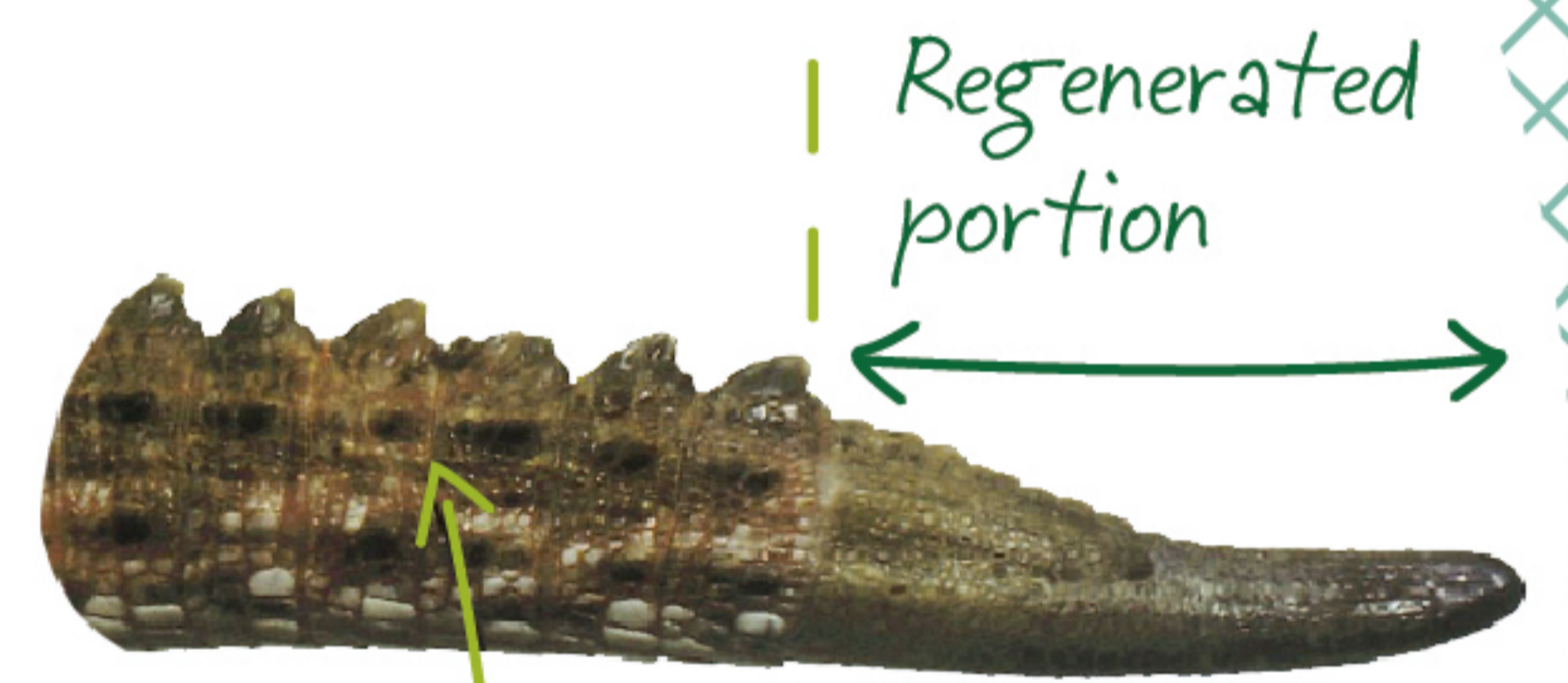


Otago Distribution

In Otago, Orokonui Ecosanctuary is the only place that tuatara live in the wild.

Tuatara were brought to Orokonui Ecosanctuary with support from both Ngāti Koata and Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki.

I can live for a long time (at least 80 years in the wild).



Regenerated portion

Fracture plane in skin

My tail can break off and regrow (very slowly).



Did you know...

I'm New Zealand's largest land reptile!

I'm a reptile but not a lizard (only living member of the order Rhynchocephalia)



I inhabit...

Islands with no mammalian predators



I eat...

Invertebrates (e.g. darkling beetles, wētā, spiders and snails), lizards, seabird eggs and hatchlings, and sometimes smaller tuatara

Kia ora!

