

**DRAWING FROM NATURE**  
**Science and Art Lessons for Kids**  
Los Angeles Times Kids' Reading Room Page



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Have you ever gone hiking and seen what looked like a snake with little legs? If so, your eyes weren't playing tricks on you. You saw a species of lizard that can grow more than a foot in length. It's called a [California alligator lizard](#).

After studying about this lizard, Romie, 5, learned "they can bite and they can grow new tails."

Alligator lizards are so named because they have unusually large mouths, a lot of sharp teeth and massive jaw muscles. They are not aggressive toward people and usually run away when approached, but if captured they will fight back and try to bite. When the alligator

lizard's tail is grabbed or pinched it will automatically separate from the lizard's body. The detached tail will wiggle and twitch for a few minutes, confusing its enemy long enough for the lizard to get away. It takes about eight months for the lizard to grow a new, full-length tail.

Romie decided to illustrate the reptile in its natural environment. To create a colorful background, she covered a thick piece of cardboard with a wash of several shades of green and brown acrylic paint.

Romie then drew her lizard on cardboard, cut it out, and carefully wrapped it with multicolored yarn. She worked the yarn back and forth until the lizard was covered and tied it off in a knot. Romie glued small pieces of ivory-colored yarn on its head and claws. Finally she glued the lizard to the cardboard and added some leaves and rocks from her yard.

Good job, Romie!