

Blue and Pink- tongued Skinks

Fact Sheet



Pink-tongued Skink, *Cyclodomorphus gerrardii*. Image: QM, Gary Cranitch.

Introduction

Blue and Pink-tongued skinks are among the largest of Australia's skinks (Family Scincidae). They live in close association with people in cities and cleared areas, as well as in bushland. In the Brisbane region, Blue-tongued and Pink-tongued Skinks are common and widespread. It is not unusual for both species to be found in gardens and dwellings in inner Brisbane.

Both species are robust and short-limbed, with broad, triangular heads. As well as tongue colour, they may be distinguished by the length and shape of their tails. Blue-tongues have tails which are shorter than their bodies and very thickset. Pink-tongues have relatively longer, narrower tails.

Although Blue-tongued and Pink-tongued Skinks are harmless they have strong jaws and a bite from either species may be painful. Their main defence, however, is bluff. If provoked or threatened, they put on warning displays, facing an aggressor with mouth agape while protruding their brightly coloured tongues. At the same time they inflate their bodies and make a loud hissing noise.

Blue-tongued Skink *Tiliqua scincoides*

The Blue-tongue was one of the first Australian lizards to be reported by zoologists. A description and painting of this skink appear in John White's 'Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales', published in 1790. The largest Blue-tongue in the Queensland Museum collection has a body length of 36 cm, but most individuals are smaller than this. Colour and pattern vary, but most blue-tongues are basically grey-brown with distinct dark brown to black bands. Young specimens have the same body pattern as the adults.

Blue-tongues do not lay eggs. They are live-bearers and give birth, usually in early summer, to up to 25 young.



Blue-tongued Skink.
Image: QM, Bruce
Cowell.

Both adults and young eat snails, insects, birds' eggs and a variety of vegetable matter. Captive and tame animals readily take scraps of fresh meat and fruit such as apples, bananas and paw-paw.

Blue-tongues are found in a wide variety of habitats over much of Australia, in open forests, heathlands and grasslands. They are active during the day.

Pink-tongued Skink *Cyclodomorphus gerrardii*

Pink-tongues grow to about 30 cm. Juveniles are very conspicuously coloured with striking black and cream bands. The colour pattern of the adults varies. The body is usually grey to fawn or brown with a series of dark brown or black bands. In some individuals these are absent or may be reduced to bands of spots.

Pink-tongues are live-bearers, producing litters of between 20 and 25 young. Their main diet is snails, but they also eat insects and small arthropods. Captive animals will take fruit. Pink-tongues often occur in the same areas as blue-tongues, but as a rule they prefer moister habitats. They live in rainforests, wet sclerophyll forests, monsoon forests and open forests of coastal Queensland and northern New South Wales.

Pink-tongued Skinks are mainly active during twilight and after dark. They are quite common in suburbia, but are encountered less frequently than blue-tongues.

Further Information

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