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The Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides scincoides*)

APPEARANCE

The Eastern Blue-tongued lizard is one of the largest members of the skink family (Scincidae). They have overlapping scales that are usually smooth and contain small plates of bone. There are more than 300 species of skinks in Australia. Females grow slightly bigger than males but the males have a proportionally larger head and stockier body than the females. They can grow to almost 600mm in total length. They are silver-grey with broad dark brown or blackish bands across the back and tail. They usually have a black stripe between the eye and the ear which may extend along the side of the neck. The tongue is dark blue and the lining of the mouth is bright pink. If handled roughly by their tail, particularly young lizards, may drop the tail. The tail stump rapidly heals and a shorter regenerated tail grows back.

LIFESTYLE

Blue-tongues usually live in open country with lots of ground cover such as tussocky grasses or leaf litter. They shelter at night among leaf litter or under large objects on the ground such as rocks and logs. Early in the morning blue-tongues emerge to bask in sunny areas before foraging for food during the warmer parts of the day. They do not produce their own body heat and rely on the warmth of their surroundings.

FOOD

Blue-tongues eat a wide variety of both plants and animals. They have strong jaw muscles so they can crush snail shells and beetles. They also eat caterpillars and other plant eating insects.

BREEDING

Female Blue-tongues give birth 3 – 5 months after mating, between December and January. They are able to breed every year if there is sufficient food. Within a few days of birth the young shed their skin for the first time. They are ready to look after themselves straight after birth and disperse within a few days.

BITE

A bite from an adult blue-tongue can cause pain, break the skin and leave a bruise but there is no venom and hence no long-term ill effect. However the bite site should be cleaned with mild disinfectant as with any animal bites.

