



Indonesian Blue-Tongued Skink

Fast Facts



Photo © Denise Soden

Common Name: Indonesian Blue-Tongued Skink, Blue-Tongued Skink, Blue-Tongue Skink

Scientific Name: *Tiliqua gigas gigas*

Family: Scincidae

Order: Squamata

Class: Reptilia

Range: Eastern Indonesian Islands



Habitat: Tropical woodlands, grasslands

Lifespan: 18-20 years in captivity

Conservation Status: Lower Risk



What do they look like?

Blue-tongued skinks are fairly large lizards, reaching 18-20 inches long. They have long, solid bodies, triangular-shaped heads, and comparatively small legs. The tail is slightly shorter than the length of the body and tapers to a point. There are several species of blue-tongued skinks inhabiting Australia and Indonesia, which all differ slightly in appearance. Indonesian blue-tongued skinks vary in color among individuals but are generally grey or pale brown with irregular dark brown or black bands across the back and tail. Their legs are mostly black with small specks of white. They are also equipped with a blue tongue, although this subspecies' tongue is pale compared to others.

How do they behave?

Indonesian blue-tongued skinks live in arid grasslands and dry sclerophyll forests. Their short legs do not allow them to climb easily, so they spend the vast majority of time on the ground hiding in the brush or in shallow burrows carved by their shovel-like snouts. They are diurnal animals, foraging and hunting during the day, and finding cover to rest at night.

What's on the menu?

Blue-tongued skinks are omnivorous, eating both animal and plant matter. In the wild, they eat fruit, insects, mollusks, and carrion. At the zoo, they are fed fruits, vegetables, and insects.

How are they born?

Unlike most reptile species, these skinks do not lay eggs. Instead they are *ovoviviparous*, giving birth to live young incased in membranous sacs, similar to the casing around the yolk of a chicken egg. Mating occurs in the spring months. Gestation lasts 3-4 months and results in 5-15 young, which are born live. Neonates are able to feed on their own after birth and are reared quickly.

Did you know?

Even though skinks have very sturdy, solid tails, they can release them like some other lizard species. This is used as a defense mechanism when necessary. Their tails will heal over, sometimes growing back, but never reform exactly like the original.

How can you help?

Blue-tongued skinks can be kept as pets, but be sure to acquire your animal from a reputable breeder or reptile rescue. Wild populations of blue-tongues are stable, but due to popularity as pets, many animals are imported from Indonesia. Australian species are protected by exportation laws and cannot be moved out of the country without permits; however, Indonesia does not enforce the same laws. Imported animals are often kept in sub-par conditions and may be carriers of disease and parasites. Make sure your animal has been captive bred in this country and is free from any compromising complications.