

Great Desert Skink

Liopholis kintorei



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Great Desert Skinks are large lizards endemic to the Australian arid zone. They have smooth bodies with orange, brown or light grey uppers and yellow, cream or grey underbellies. These robust lizards can grow up to 44cm long and weigh up to 350 grams. Males are heavier than females and have broader heads

These are traditionally important animals to Aboriginal groups in central Australia. They are called different names in various language groups and Anangu (“the people”) of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands refer to them as ‘Tjakura’.

Diet

Great Desert Skinks forage in the evening and after dark. They eat mainly invertebrates (including beetles, cockroaches, ants, spiders and termites), small vertebrates that fit into their mouths, flowers, leaves and fruit.

Breeding

Females give birth to anywhere from one to five young between December and February. Young adults usually leave their birth burrows after three years and sometimes move into a burrow vacated by mulgaras (small native mammals).

Habitat

Great Desert Skinks live mainly in spinifex grasslands on sand plains and in areas between dunes. They dig complex burrow systems which can be over one metre deep and five metres wide with up to 10 entrances and many tunnels. During the cooler months of the year they hibernate in specially constructed chambers in their burrow system. These burrow systems are communal. Some skinks prefer to move around while others stick to the same burrow.

Threats

Great Desert Skinks have historically lived across 20 per cent of the Australian mainland in the Western Desert Region.

Great Desert Skinks prefer to live in areas of spinifex, and a major threat is the destruction of their habitat by large, intense wildfires (many areas have been burnt within the last 15 years) reducing the availability of food and exposing the skinks to increased risks of predation.

They are also under threat from introduced species (and humans). Rabbits have been seen taking over Great Desert Skink burrows and tourism activities in their habitat areas can lead to permanently vacated burrows. Introduced feral cats and foxes prey upon skinks.



Skink toilets! Great Desert Skinks have a special area outside the burrow where they defaecate. This distinctive latrine arrangement helps people find their burrows.

Conservation

Traditional patch burning in spinifex areas will reduce the intensity of bushfires and promote areas of new growth. To help prevent the incidence of fire, always observe fire warnings.

You can help the Great Desert Skink by:

- finding out more about the Great Desert Skink and telling others about it
- being a responsible pet owner – desex cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks.



Photo Peter Canty

Great Desert Skink

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

