

Many species of skink have an extensive vocal range including squeaks, chirps and grunts.

Skinks give birth to litters of two to eight live young with the exception of the Suters skink. Suters skinks usually lay clutches of three to four eggs in nests scraped out under large stones.

Most NZ skinks are diurnal and will have a favourite basking spot. They will even fold their legs back alongside their bodies thus heating their undersides with the full contact of the warm basing surface.

NZ skinks are usually quite earthy coloured which helps them to camouflage within their habitats but the scree skink has a striking yellow and black patterning!

Skink feet have long thin toes, rounded at the tip for running. Skinks run with a wriggling motion and are even able to swim short bursts with this snake like action.

Skinks slough their skins in small pieces so unlike geckos they do not leave tell tale portions of their discarded skin behind them.

Skinks and geckos both drop their tails when frightened or threatened. The muscles in the tail fan out and those in the stump contract together closing off blood vessels to limit bleeding. New skin soon covers the stump and a replacement tail grows from this point.

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*Geckos and Skinks*



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Lizards are important for many plants, because they spread seeds by eating and carrying them to new places as well as pollinating some flowers.

Almost all New Zealand lizards give birth to live young.

There are two groups of New Zealand geckos, the genus *Naultinus*, the "green tree geckos" which are all diurnal and arboreal. The other genus, *Hoplodactylus*, contains nocturnal earthy coloured geckos. Many of our geckos are only found in New Zealand.

Gecko feet are well adapted to gripping smooth surfaces. Tiny claws are at the tip of each toe and microscopic hair-like 'lamellae' on the pads of the foot greatly increase the amount of grip. This works so well that some species of geckos can walk up glass.

Geckos have rather loose fitting skin with granular scales that can be seen on close inspection. "Old" skins are usually shed almost whole during the sloughing.

Green tree geckos may sometimes have yellow offspring! Normal green geckos have blue and yellow pigments in their skin, but yellow geckos lack the blue pigment. It is harder for these rare yellow animals to survive because their unusual colouring makes them more obvious to predators.

Geckos use their spoon shaped tongues to clean their eyes as they cannot blink. Their eyes are permanently covered by their eyelids, which are transparent and fused together.

Male gecko can be identified by the bulge at the base of the tail on the underside. This contains the hemipenes, the copulatory organ.

Many geckos have quite a large vocal range with warning calls, chirps, squeaks and even barks. Many of these sounds are beyond our range of hearing.

Gestation periods vary among different species of geckos. There have even been cases of females storing sperm and not giving birth until well after their known gestation period. One but more often two babies are born at a time.

Gravid females actually act as mobile incubators for their eggs, which hatch inside their bodies. This adaptation keeps the young from getting too cold and is called ovoviviparity.

Nocturnal geckos will often come out during the day to sun bask.

*Hoplodactylus* geckos react to light by becoming paler in bright light and darker as the light diminishes allowing the gecko to make the best use of the warmth available.

Occasionally a dropped tail may not sever completely and another will grow beside it giving the gecko a two or sometimes three pronged tail!

The Duvaucel's gecko is found on Lady Alice Island in the Hauraki Gulf and in 1994 kiore (Polynesian rats) were eradicated from the island, making it rat free. Soon after the island was deemed rat free, Duvaucel's, thought to live only in trees, were found living on the ground in large numbers.

Skinks are recognizable by their glossy almost snake-like appearance. It is their tight skin and shiny overlapping scales that give skinks this distinctive sheen.

Skinks tails are always longer than their bodies except perhaps when the skink has grown a new tail after dropping the original. Regenerated tails are never as long as the original and are usually slightly different in colour and pattern.

Smaller skink species usually live for about 10 years and the larger up to 20 years.

Unlike geckos, skinks are able to close their eyes as they have a movable eyelid.

Skinks also use hearing and their long narrow tongues to test the air for the presence of food or danger such as predators or other skinks.