



Common Five lined Skink (*Plestiodon fasciatus*)

Ples-tee-o-don fas-she-ot-is



Need Photo of Adult Male in Breeding Coloration

Description: 4 to 8 inches. The five lined skink is a small, very smooth scaled lizard with small, reduced limbs. Ground color can range from black, to dark brown or olive brown with five, wide lighter colored longitudinal stripes, all of about the same width and spacing from the snout to about the base of the tail. Juveniles also possess a vibrant blue tail, which often fades into adulthood, becoming grayish or brownish. During the breeding season, male five lined skinks may also develop vibrant reddish to reddish orange throats and jaws as well. Most of these features distinguish five lined skinks from racerunners (*Aspidoscelis sexlineata*) and northern prairie skinks (*Plestiodon septentrionalis*).

Taxonomy and Classification:

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertillia

Infraorder: Scincomorpha

Family: Scincidae

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Genus: Plestiodon

Species: *Plestiodon fasciatus**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Similar/Confusing Species: Northern prairie skinks (*Plestiodon septentrionalis*) have wide, dark lateral stripes bordered with lighter stripes on a light brown, tan, or bronze colored background. Prairie racerunners (*Aspidoscelis sexlineata*) have granular scales and enlarged, rectangular scalation on the head and ventral surface, unlike skinks.

Etymology: Plestiodon- Pleistos (most) odontos (teeth). fasciatus-fascia (stripe or band); atus (pertaining to or provided with).

Subspecies: None.

Range & Habitat: Five lined skinks generally occur in central, west central, northeastern, and portions of eastern Wisconsin. They generally prefer habitats with sandy soil including oak and pine barrens, forest and woodlot edges and openings, and road or railroad grades adjacent to these habitats.

Habits & Natural History: Five lined skinks are fairly secretive diurnal species, often occurring in microhabitats such as under rocks, logs, bark, rotting stumps, and other natural or manmade debris. Although primarily terrestrial, five lined skinks are known to scale the sides of trees, where in both situations, hunt for and consume small insects, arthropods, and other invertebrates. Five lined skinks will often undergo caudal autotomy when captured or disturbed, which involves dropping all or parts of their tail to avoid predation. A new tail regenerates within several weeks, but is not as vibrantly colored as the original. Common five lined skinks are oviparous, or egg laying.

Phenology: Five lined skinks emerge from overwintering as early as late April or May, and remain active throughout the year through late September or October (or even later into the year if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit).

Conservation Status: WI Uncommon to locally common, but no special protections afforded. Regulated by WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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