



## African Fire Skink *Lepidothyris/Ripoa fernandi*

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- These large skinks are indigenous to the tropical rainforests of western Africa.
- Large, smooth scaled skink a golden-bronze dorsal coloration and red, black, orange, and white lateral stripes, bars, and flecking.
- African fire skinks are primarily a terrestrial species.
- If provided the proper care, fire skinks can attain longevity of 15-20 years or more.

### **Size**

Ranges from about 2- 2 ½” hatchlings, and 12-15” as adults.

### **Housing**

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling fire skinks can be housed in a 15-20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults require a minimum of a 40-50 gallon long terrarium or enclosure, especially for a pair of skinks. Provide these skinks with substrates that enable burrowing such as aspen or Sani Chip shavings, cypress mulch, or Reptile Bark. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. Provide a bowl or dish of fresh water. Misting once to twice daily will also help maintain humidity at around 60-70%.

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Ideal temperatures for these skinks range from 80-85 degrees F on the cool side and about 90-95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. These skinks require overhead UVA/UVB incandescent and fluorescent lighting to thrive.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

### **Feeding/Diet**

In the wild, fire skinks are omnivorous, meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter.

Feed these skinks in captivity a mixed assortment of crickets, mealworms, superworms, roaches, and waxworms. Gut load these prey items by feeding them commercially available diets for added nutritional value. They may eat pinky mice as well, but feed them these sparingly, if at all. Feed them these insects in a bowl or dish every other day.

Provide calcium and vitamin D3 supplements in Blue tongued skink diets whenever possible.

### **Handling**

African fire skinks can become very accustomed to regular human interaction, and can often even be hand fed. Many can also be handled for short periods of time, but are often a faster moving and flightier species when in hand. Care should therefore be taken to not accidentally drop these animals when handling them.

\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\*