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Shingleback Skink (*Tiliqua rugosa*)

Uniqueness that Goes Through the Roof

Also occasionally known as the bobtail skinks, shingleback skinks belong to a genus of large, primarily terrestrial skinks which are named for their thick fleshy blue tongues that are displayed as a warning or for defensive displays. Four subspecies are currently recognized; the western shingleback (*T. rugosa rugosa*), eastern shingleback (*T. rugosa asper*), Rottneest Island shingleback (*T. rugosa konowi*), and northern shingleback (*T. rugosa palarra*). Shinglebacks are a large, stout bodied species of skink with reduced limbs, and heavily armored bodies with large, overlapping plate-like scales. They can vary in color from blackish, to dark brown, reddish brown, olive-brown, to yellowish or cream colored. The head is broad and triangular, and the tail is short, rounded, and stumped in appearance. Care and husbandry for shingleback skinks is, in many regards, similar to that of their closely related blue tongued skink cousins (*Tiliqua spp.*).

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Scincomorpha

Family: Scincidae

Subfamily: Lygosominae

Genus: *Tiliqua*

Species: *Tiliqua rugosa**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, shingleback skinks can attain longevity of 15 to 25 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Shingleback skinks are an unusual species of medium sized to large, primarily terrestrial skinks indigenous to Australia. More specifically, this bizarre species ranges from southern to southwestern Australia, from Western Australia, across the southern coastal regions of South

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Australia, non-coastal regions of Victoria, and New South Wales, and north into south central Queensland. Within this range, these species of shingleback skinks occupy primarily terrestrial environments, including the arid to semi-arid shrublands and scrublands, to desert grasslands and sandy dunes, where they are most often found in open areas and other clearings.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Legal and Regulatory Status(*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Shingleback skinks are medium sized to large species of skinks that can range from about 6 to 9 inches as hatchlings. They average about 15 to 24 inches as adults, which can depend on the species, locality, and sex of the animal. Some species can become slightly larger as well.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling shingleback skinks can be housed in a 20 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults require a minimum of a 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Provide shingleback skinks with substrates that enable burrowing such as aspen chip shavings, cypress mulch, or orchid 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 to help provide and maintain adequate hydration and humidity. Shingleback skinks are terrestrial, and do not require tall, or arboreal enclosures.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

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 shingleback skinks range from 75 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and 80 to 85 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Provide a basking spot of around 90 to 95 degrees. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of shingleback skinks in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to 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 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Omnivorous; In the wild, shingleback skinks are omnivorous, meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter. These large skinks will feed on a variety of insects, snails, slugs, and other gastropods, worms, other invertebrates, as well as the occasional small rodent, smaller reptiles, or other smaller animals they can capture and consume. In captivity, feed shingleback skinks in captivity a mixed assortment of chopped up vegetables including carrots, peas, collard, mustard, and dandelion greens, and beans. Several commercially available omnivore mix diets are also

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available. They will also eat a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Shingleback skinks also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

As with many reptiles, hatchling and juvenile shingleback skinks typically tend to be initially more nervous and defensive. These skinks may open their mouths and gape/hiss when disturbed. Handle your skink gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Most adult shingleback skinks will settle down considerably and become quite docile and personable pets to keep.

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

Contact

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

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