

Care Sheet:

Green skinks



Green skink (*Oligosoma chloronoton*)

Adult Size: Up to 125mm SVL.

Threat status: 'At Risk – Declining.'

Lifespan: Unknown.

Habitat: scrub, herb-field, tussock-grassland, flax and wetlands, either in dense vegetation or under rocks / logs.

Permit Level: Insurance population species.

Enclosure:

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 150x70x70cm (LxWxH).

Ideal Group Size:

1:1 (M:F).

Compatible Species:

Unknown. Highly aggressive towards conspecifics and other species of lizards.

Recommended Cage Furnishing:

Green skinks are diurnal and avid sun-baskers, but prefer damper / higher-humidity habitats that sympatric species such as Scree skinks. In the wild, green skinks will often be found occupying swamp margins and gully systems, where they make use of deep rock piles or dense vegetation as retreats. They have also been recorded as relatively fossorial in the wild – making natural burrows through friable substrates. As such, your enclosure should offer ample areas for these skinks to bask in full sun, as well as areas of permanent moisture (Not wet, but damp), such as discrete layers of dampened soil or sphagnum moss that this species is able to burrow through and take refuge in. Green skinks have been known to climb so offer above-ground climbing / basking areas such as branches (at least 1.5x the width of the lizard) or low scrub for them to climb in. Green skinks are highly territorial and aggressive towards each other, as such, when

housing more than one individual green skink in an enclosure, provide multiple visual barriers (low vegetation, rocks, logs etc.) as well as numerous complex and compact refuge sites (hiding places) – which allow skinks to avoid each other when necessary. Keepers holding this species must remain vigilant and regularly sight / inspect individuals for signs of suppression / fighting (hiding away or not basking, poor body condition, tail loss or toe loss, scars on the head / legs / flanks) and separate affected individuals immediately or risk serious injuries / death. Scars between the neck and forelimb on female green skinks may be indicative of mating behaviour. Fresh water should always be available.

Breeding:

Green skinks are aggressively territorial and it is not uncommon for individuals (particularly males – which are usually smaller) to be seriously injured or killed when housed with others. Gravid females give birth to 1-4 young in late summer/autumn (February / March). Neonates should be separated from the parents as soon as they are found after birth, to minimise any issues related to food competition or possible predation by the adults. The young should be fed on small arthropods such as flies, moths, crickets, spiders and slaters which are appropriate to the size of the lizard (about 2/3 the size of their head).

Diet:

These skinks like many others are not picky in terms of prey items and will eat a wide range of invertebrates such as locusts, spiders, slaters, sand-hoppers, harvestmen, beetles, crickets, mites and flies. Make sure that any insects from the garden can also be thrown into the enclosure, but make sure that they have not been exposed to toxic chemicals such as fly-sprays or insecticides. They are also known to eat soft fruits and berries, so can be provided with native fruits such as *Coprosma* spp. and Kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*) berries, or with exotic fruits such as banana, mango, watermelon, or pear / apple puree. Avoid feeding citrus fruits.

Notes:

- Green skinks are notoriously aggressive, and this has posed extreme challenges when attempting to breed this species in captivity. It is essential to provide an abundance of refuge sites and complex habitat for individuals to avoid one another when housing more than one individual in an enclosure.