

Care Sheet:

Copper, Ornate, Whitaker's skinks



Copper skink (*Oligosoma aeneum*)

Adult Size: Up to 76mm SVL.

Threat status: 'Not Threatened.'

Lifespan: Unknown.

Habitat: forest, scrub, grassland, sand dunes, often living in areas with a dense ground vegetation cover or under rocks / logs.

Permit Level: Insurance population species.



Ornate skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*)

Adult Size: Up to 84mm SVL.

Threat status: 'At Risk - Relict.'

Lifespan: Unknown.

Habitat: forest, scrub, grassland, often living in areas with a dense ground vegetation cover or under rocks / logs.

Permit Level: Insurance population species.



Whitaker's skink (*Oligosoma whitakeri*)

Adult Size: Up to 101mm SVL.

Threat status: 'Threatened – Nationally Endangered.'

Lifespan: ~50 years recorded in captivity.

Habitat: coastal forest and scrub, often living in seabird burrows, under rocks / logs or in deep rock piles / screens.

Permit Level: Conservation species.

Enclosure:

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 100x50x50cm (LxWxH).

Ideal Group Size:

1:1 (M:F).

Compatible Species:

Green geckos, Pacific / Forest geckos, 'Common' geckos, Goldstripe geckos.

Recommended Cage Furnishing:

Moisture (or humidity) is important in influencing the habitat choice of these skinks. Therefore, your enclosure should offer an area of permanent moisture (Not wet, but damp), such as a thick layer of damp leaf litter or damp soil covered by a large log. Dampened sphagnum moss is also good for lining part of the floor of your enclosure. These skinks are not great climbers (though are known to climb on occasion) so offer plenty of ground space for foraging. Provide numerous refuge sites (hiding places) at ground level, low growing plants, and an area where these skinks can gain access to sunlight for basking. Although these species are secretive, they will cryptically sun-bask either with their head or the side of their body sitting in the sun outside a refuge) gravid females in particular can be avid sun-baskers. Fresh water should always be available.

Breeding:

Mating is thought to occur in spring, with 2-6 young being born in summer, usually in January / February. Neonates are very small (20-30mmSVL) and should be separated from the parents after birth to minimise any issues related to food competition (or possible predation by the adults). Tiny food items need to be provided. Adding fresh leaf litter to the baby enclosure, as well as providing wingless fruit flies, should provide suitable food for the neonates. But, be careful not to lose any of the young skinks while removing the old leaf litter from the enclosure.

Diet:

These skinks like many others are not picky in terms of prey items and will eat a wide range of invertebrates such as spiders, slaters, sand-hoppers, harvestmen, beetles, crickets, mites and flies. They are also known to eat soft fruits and berries. A good way to feed these skinks in captivity is to collect fresh leaf litter and sprinkle it onto the floor of your enclosure. This will usually contain an abundance of small invertebrates that will be full of nutrients. Other 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.

Notes:

- These species are particularly secretive and you probably won't see them too often day or night. They tend to spend a significant amount of time hiding beneath leaf litter and logs, and as a result very little is known about these secretive species. Copper and Ornate skinks are considered to be diurnal / crepuscular, whereas Whitaker's skinks are considered to be nocturnal / crepuscular.
- Copper skinks are one of the most common skink species in the North Island and are often found in residential gardens or brought in by cats.