

# Care Sheet:

## Otago, Grand, Scree skinks



**Otago skink (*Oligosoma otagense*)**

**Adult Size:** Up to 130mm SVL.

**Threat status:** 'Threatened – Nationally Endangered.'

**Lifespan:** 40+ years.

**Habitat:** rock outcrops / rock crevices in tussock-grassland.

**Permit Level:** Conservation species.



**Grand skink (*Oligosoma grande*)**

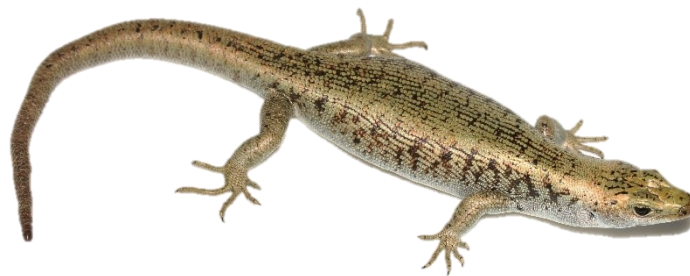
**Adult Size:** Up to 115mm SVL.

**Threat status:** 'Threatened – Nationally Endangered.'

**Lifespan:** 40+ years.

**Habitat:** rock outcrops / rock crevices in tussock-grassland.

**Permit Level:** Conservation species.



**Scree skink (*Oligosoma waimatense*)**

**Adult Size:** Up to 110mm SVL.

**Threat status:** 'Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable.'

**Lifespan:** 40+ years.

**Habitat:** dry rocky areas, rock outcrops, scree slopes, deep rock piles, rock crevices, alpine grassland, pebble river terraces.

**Permit Level:** Insurance population species.

### **Enclosure:**

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 150x70x70cm (LxWxH).

### **Ideal Group Size:**

1:1 (M:F).

### **Compatible Species:**

Unknown. At Auckland Zoo, Grand skinks have been kept successfully with Jewelled geckos.

**Recommended Cage Furnishing:**

These skinks are saxicolous (living among rocky substrates) so enclosures should be furnished to replicate this habitat. A rocky substrate should be provided on the ground in the form of gravel and cover should be created using low-growing species of plants (e.g. *Melicytus alpinus* or sedges) which occur in the same habitat. Typically, these lizards take refuge within deep fissures in rock tors, and (in the case of scree skinks) also in deep rock piles on scree slopes or boulder-field habitat. As such providing refuge sites which mimic these habitats will serve these species best, for example rock stacks (schist slabs etc) or rough tiles with appropriate sized gaps for these skinks to squeeze into, and which are secure (no risk of them shifting / crushing animals). It is important that these species are provided with plenty of room to move around and rough surfaces to climb over in captivity in order for them to wear their claws down, failing to sufficiently provide these conditions will result in claws becoming overgrown and 'curling'.

**Breeding:**

These species' do best kept as pairs in captivity. Sexual maturity is reached in 4 - 8 years and females may produce annually or biennially. Mating occurs in late summer with litters of up to four born in summer the following year. In the wild Otago skinks often occur in family groups consisting of a male, female and several generations of young. However, to avoid the risk of cannibalism (and competition for food from adults) it is preferable to separate juvenile skinks from the adults and maintain them in a smaller juvenile rearing enclosure.

**Diet:**

In the wild these species consume a wide range of invertebrates, smaller species of lizards, and the fruit from native plants such as *Melicytus alpinus*. In captivity they have been fed a diet consisting mainly of invertebrates including crickets, beetles, locusts and moths, reptile vitamin supplements will need to be added to insects which are captive-bred. Their diet may be supplemented on occasion with such items as egg, fish or mince, as a substitute for the smaller vertebrates / lizards they sometimes consume in the wild, although these items should only be used sparingly because overfeeding with these food items can cause obesity and other more-serious health issues.

**Notes:**

- These species occur in harsh dry climates with hot dry summers and cold winters where snow may cover the ground during the coldest part of winter. As such these species have proven more challenging to breed in warmer, more-humid climates (e.g. areas in the upper North Island), where these species may not experience the conditions necessary to trigger reproductive processes.