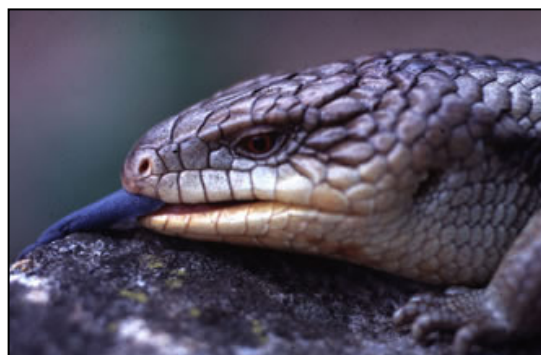


# Eastern Blue Tongue Lizard

## *Tiliqua scincoides*

### What do they look like?

Blue-tongued lizards are the largest members of the skink family (Scincidae). Skink lizards have overlapping scales that are usually smooth and contain small plates of bone.



The Eastern Blue-tongued is silvery-grey with broad dark brown or blackish bands across the back and tail. Individuals on the coast usually have black stripe between the eye and the ear, which may extend along the side of the neck. Eastern Blue-tongue lizards have a long body, large head and short legs and toes and can grow to almost 600 mm in total length of which about 360 mm is head and body. The tail is shorter than the body and generally tapers evenly to a point.

### Where do they live?

Blue-tongues usually live in open country with lots of ground cover such as tussocky grasses or leaf litter. They shelter at night among leaf litter or under large objects on the ground such as rocks and logs. The Eastern Blue-tongue occurs throughout much of the state, and on the coastal plain.

Early in the morning blue-tongues emerge to bask in sunny areas before foraging for food in the warmer parts of the day. During the cold weather they remain inactive, buried deep in their shelter sites.

Adult blue-tongues adapt well to suburbs where there are large backyards with plenty of shelter. They rapidly become used to human activity, and may live in the same place for many years.

### What do they eat?

Blue-tongues eat a wide variety of both plants and animals. They are not very agile and the animals they eat are mostly slow-moving. Their teeth are large and they have strong jaw muscles so they can crush snail shells and beetles. Plenty of food such as snails, slugs and caterpillars are usually available in gardens, and a blue-tongue in the garden will help to keep down the number of snails and plant-eating insects.



## **Breeding and Lifecycle**

Blue-tongues live alone for most of the year, but between September and November males pursue females and mating occurs. At this time, males may fight aggressively among themselves. Mating may be rough, with females carrying scrape marks from the male's teeth.

Female blue-tongues give birth three to five months after mating, between December and April. The Eastern Blue-tongue usually gives birth between December and January. The Eastern Blue-tongue is able to breed every year if it has sufficient food. At birth, the young eat the placental membranes and shed their skin for the first time within a few days. The young are ready to look after themselves straight after birth and disperse within a few days.

Of all the blue-tongues, the Eastern Blue-tongue has the largest litters and the smallest young; up to 19 (but usually 10) young are born. They become adults at about three years of age when they have a total length of about 400 mm and are long lived.

### **Did you know?**

When threatened, blue-tongues turn towards the threat, open their mouth wide and stick out their broad blue tongue that contrasts vividly with their pink mouth. This display, together with the large size of the head, may frighten off predators. If the threat does not go away, blue-tongues may hiss and flatten out the body, making themselves look bigger.

If handled roughly by their tail, Eastern Blue-tongues, particularly young ones, may drop their tail. The tail stump rapidly heals and a shorter regenerated tail grows back.

