

CROCODILE SKINK

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Scincidae

Genus: Tribolonotus

Species: gracilis



Name	Sex	ID	Born	Acquired	Notes
Eleanor	Female	Has a stumpy tail	1994	Nov. 2004	*Hatched in CZBG Reptile House *She lost end of tail but it grew back
Jeanette	Female	No stripe on back of head	1995	Nov. 2005	*Hatched in CZBG Reptile House

Common Names: Red-eyed crocodile skink, orange-eyed crocodile skink, painted skink, casque-headed skink, helmeted skink, bush crocodile.

Range and Habitat: New Guinea (Irian Jaya and north Papua). Little information is found about their natural habitat, but specimens have been found in moist habitat, along waterways.

Description: They have a prehistoric look, often described as “armored.” They have bony chevrons protruding from their backs, forming four lines which gradually diminish near the tip of the tail. The head is triangular with six bony points forming a casque at the rear of the head. A bright orange ring nearly surrounds each eye. Juveniles are dark brownish black with a cream belly, while adults are solid reddish brown with the orange eye rings. Some have orange on the neck as well.

Adult Size: They are 2 ½ inches long at hatching and can reach 8-10 inches long as adults. Males are slightly larger than females. The average size is 7.2 inches. The tail comprises about half the body length.

Voice: They seem to be the only lizards outside of geckos that can vocalize. They make a small squawking sound when distressed. It has also been described as a high-pitched barking sound.

Diet in the Wild: Insects of all sorts.

Diet at the Zoo: Crickets and other “feeder” insects.

Reproduction:

- They are oviparous (egg laying).
- Because of the secretive nature of these animals, mating practices have not been observed.
- One source claims that only one egg is laid at a time, and there appears evidence that there is parental neo-natal care.

- Another source states that three eggs were laid at one time, with another clutch laid just as one hatched.
- Incubation takes about 70 days.

Life Span: Average life span in captivity is 5-6 years while the longevity record was set at 12 years. Life span in the wild is unknown.

Perils: They have no natural predators in the wild.

Protection: Their only protection seems to be to freeze or “play dead” and to run for cover and hide. They cannot whip their tails or use their claws, and it seems that biting is not one of their options.

Interesting Facts:

- These animals have only recently been discovered, there is not a lot of research that has been done.
- Some scientists believe these skinks are the “missing link” between modern reptiles and dinosaurs.
- These animals seem to be very shy and like to hide a lot.
- This behavior in captive animals has led some people to think they are strictly nocturnal, while others are sure they are diurnal, and a third opinion states they are crepuscular.

Ecology: Not much is known. Certainly having no natural enemies can allow these animal populations to survive, while having a low birth rate. Habitat loss and the pet trade could decimate the population.

Primary References:

Russell, Matt. “Crocodile Skinks.” “Reptiles,” December 1997, pp.

Various Web sites including:

Grady Calhoun at www.cincyherps.com

Melissa Dumouchelle at www.bawaaherps.com

www.baskingwonders.com

www.reptilezone.com