

Prehensile-tailed Skink

Scientific Name: *Corucia zebrata*

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Scincidae



The largest known species of skink, the Prehensile-Tailed Skink has an average length of 24+ inches but may reach a length up to 32 inches, approximately 2/3 of which is a relatively slender but strong prehensile tail. The head is massive and wedge-shaped with a large scale over the snout and very large nostrils. The eyes are often bright orange.

Range

The range of the prehensile tailed skink is the Solomon Islands.

Habitat

Prehensile tailed skinks inhabit rainforests.

Gestation

Gestation takes 6 to 7 months.

Litter

1-2 live young

Behavior

Prehensile tailed skinks are primarily nocturnal but may sleep in plain sight during the day. Although they can move around on the ground, they are almost strictly arboreal. When moving they may be seen to hold on to a branch with one leg and the tail while reaching for another branch. They eat only vegetation and get water as it drips from wet leaves (or in captivity from moisture on the wall of the exhibit or cage.) Males are very territorial and generally cannot be kept together in captivity. These skinks exhibit coprophagy (eating their own feces). This may be necessary to produce the proper gut flora and fauna in youngsters.

Reproduction

Mating in prehensile tailed skinks seems to take place at sunset. After 6-7 months the female will give birth to 1-2 youngsters that are 10-12 inches long (approximately 1/3 the size of the mother). Highly unusual for a reptile, the mother and young will sometimes remain together for months, (possibly years) defending each other and mutually defending a territory.

Wild Diet

Vegetation, often the shoots of a specific vine