

Common Name: Prehensile-tailed skink

Scientific Name: *Corucia zebrata*



IUCN Red list Status: not listed

AZA Conservation Program: Studbook

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Scincidae

Genus: *Corucia*

Habitat: The Prehensile-tailed Skink is native to the tropical rainforests of the Solomon Islands (located Northwest of Australia). It is arboreal and spends little or no time on the ground.

Threats in the Wild: The Prehensile-tailed Skink's natural range is restricted to the Solomon Islands. However, they have become a very popular pet. In 1992 the species was classified as threatened by CITES. The Solomon Islands' government has regulated trade to avoid over collection for the pet industry. Logging has also eliminated much of the prehensile-tailed skink's habitat. Almost 90% of their habitat has been lost to logging.

Physical Characteristics: The Prehensile-tailed Skink is the largest of the skink species; they can grow to be 24-32 inches from the snout to the tip of the tail. In fact half of that length is their long tail. The head is large and flat with small eyes and large ear openings. The powerful mouth has a short tongue that is broad, flat, and fleshy. The skin is smoother and shinier than any other lizard's and the scales are smooth, flat, and overlapping. The body of the Prehensile-tailed Skink ranges in color from dark green to almost black. Black, yellow, and shades of green decorate the back, tail, and belly in random spots or stripes. This color pattern and their naturally slow movement help camouflage Prehensile-tailed Skinks from their enemies. Unlike other lizards, the Prehensile-tailed Skink does not have the ability to regenerate if its tail should break off when caught by predators. The large prehensile tail and long sharp claws allow it to climb with ease. In fact, this skink can support its entire body with its large muscular tail, which is as long as the trunk and head combined.

Reproduction: Prehensile-tailed Skinks mate in the trees, usually in the early evening. Copulation can last 5-15 minutes. When a male and female mate, the male pins the female by biting her neck and shoulders, often to the point of removing scales and inflicting serious wounds. Most mature females will have some degree of scarring along their backs as testimony to prior reproductive acts.



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The Solomon Island Prehensile-tailed Skink is ovoviviparous (producing eggs that hatch within the female's body without obtaining nourishment from it). After a gestation period of about six to seven months one, or occasionally two, large young will be born. The baby is 6-9 inches long and stays with the mother for about 6 months after birth. The young stay in close association with the parent although the parent does not directly protect the offspring. The presence of the adult skink deters some predators. Females, in optimal conditions, can reproduce every nine months, but they don't reach sexual maturity until the age of three.

Longevity: can live up to 20 years if in the right conditions

Diet: The Prehensile-Tailed Skink is nocturnal and herbivorous. The leaves of the Solomon Island creeper plant form an important part of their diet.

Signs of Stress: Heavy breathing, trying to bite, quick movement.

Handling: Show this animal only on a perch (branch). His claws can tear skin. Have a branch ready when removing him from his enclosure; he is arboreal and is more secure when perched on a substantial branch. (In fact, he feels most secure when on the highest perch possible, so if your head is the highest spot in the room, he may try to get on top of it.) If he doesn't readily come out onto a branch, wear gloves to pick him up. Pick him up from his back (be alert!) and quickly place him on his branch. Keep an eye on him! He is not an animal you can take for granted while showing! He will want to turn around on his perch, so you will have to change your grip and/or two of you can each have a stick and let him climb from stick to stick. If you take him outside, avoid low hanging branches or other items he could grab. Don't take him inside Amazonia. When returning him to his exhibit, place his branch inside and he will probably crawl off. If not, once again wearing gloves, pluck him off his perch and place him quickly in his enclosure.

Docent Animal Specifics: Oscar was born in 2002. Touch animal with caution. (He can be nippy.) Take your time coaxing him from his enclosure; it's warm in there, and he may not want to come out! Once out, however, he is usually a willing ambassador.



Fact Sheet – Reptilia – Prehensile-tailed skink
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