

# Skink Facts

- Largest family of lizards (Scincidae)
- Between 800-1200 species
- Particularly abundant in great forests of Africa and Australia/Indonesia
- Variety of habitats from desert to forest
- May be terrestrial (ground dwelling), arboreal (tree dwelling) or fossorial (burrowing)
- Range in size from a few inches to over 2 ½ feet.
- Variety in reproduction. Some lay eggs; other are ovoviviparous (give birth to live young that have developed from an egg that has hatched within the mother). Some are truly viviparous, meaning the young are born with a placenta.

## General Characteristics

- Rounded or cylindrical body
- Tail pointed at tip
- Smooth, flat, overlapping and often shiny scales
- Usually an external ear opening
- Eyes with eyelids
- Short tongue that is board, flat, fleshy and slightly notched at the end
- Head usually ends in a sharp snout
- In most species (not all) the tapering tail is easily broken but can be regenerated

## Tail Autotomy (self amputation)

Many lizards break their tails when confronted with an enemy (or roughly handled). This break does not occur between the vertebrae (tail bones), but in a zone of weakness in a vertebra itself. These specialized vertebrae can be voluntarily split by muscular contraction; sphincter muscles in the tail stump close off the caudal artery to prevent excessive bleeding.

Although tail autotomy may seem like a drastic measure, in actuality it does the lizard little harm, for a new tail is soon regenerated. The new tail, however, is not identical to the original. Its skeletal support consists of a fibrocartilaginous rod instead of vertebrae; it also differs in musculature, scale size and form, and color. Some skinks return to the site where they lost their tail and swallow the remains. Tails also serve as a storage site for fats and lipids.

# Skinks found in Indiana



## GROUND SKINK

*Scincella lateralis*  
Southwest Indiana



## BROAD HEAD SKINK

*Eumeces laticeps*  
South and Central  
Indiana



## FIVE-LINED SKINK

*Eumeces fasciatus*  
Statewide