



Ornate Skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*)

DESCRIPTION

The ornate skink is light brown with large pale blotches on the tail, extending on to the back. The belly has a yellow-red tinge and there is a 'teardrop' pattern beneath each eye. Adults are relatively small, up to 80mm long excluding their tail.



DISTRIBUTION, BREEDING AND FEEDING

The ornate skink is found only in the North Island and some offshore islands. They prefer damp, humid conditions and are often found in forested areas with deep leaf litter, or stable cover such as deep rock piles or thick vegetation. They are most active at dawn and dusk. This species is very secretive and has a small home range, often of only a few metres if the habitat is suitable. Their main food source is small snails, beetles, spiders and plant matter.

Their young are born in late January and February and, like most New Zealand skink species, are born live.



ORNATE SKINKS IN TARANAKI

In Taranaki, ornate skinks continue to be occasionally discovered in gardens, around houses and in forested areas. Taranaki ornate skink populations will benefit from increased management of predators at a wide range of sites such as managed Key Native Ecosystems and conservation projects like the Rotokare Scenic Reserve predator-proof fenced area.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Plant native vegetation on your property to enhance habitat for reptiles.
- Control predators on your property such as cats, rats and stoats to help protect reptile populations in Taranaki.
- Herbicides can be harmful to lizards. Be careful when using sprays around your property.
- Keep pet cats inside at night.



CONSERVATION

The ornate skink is a threatened, endemic species and listed as 'at risk'. Populations are in decline and their continued existence on the mainland of New Zealand is uncertain.

THREATS

Threats to this species include:

- Predation by introduced species such as cats, stoats, rats and hedgehogs.
- Habitat loss and degradation.

QUICK FACTS

- Ornate skinks have very short toes compared to other skink species
- Ornate skinks can often be confused with copper skinks, as they have similar markings and colouring.
- Ornate skinks are a protected species.

Example of artificially made skink habitat.

