

Lizards of AOTEAROA

All skinks and geckos have different patterns, unique like your fingerprints!

Some colours can help with camouflage or blending in with their habitat. Some colours help to attract a mate. And some colours can help to absorb heat when they are sunbathing.

Geckos

There are at least 48 species of gecko in Aotearoa with more being discovered...

How to identify a gecko:

- Has soft, smooth skin even if it looks rough
- Can cling to many surfaces, even upside down!
- Geckos have big eyes
- Has no eyelids and will lick eyes to keep them clean
- large strong legs and toes



Skinks

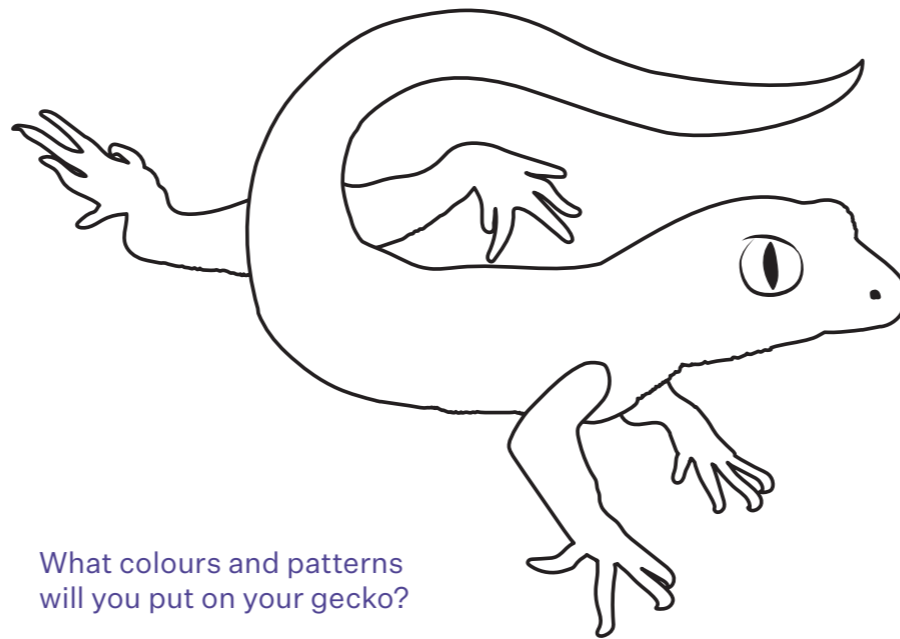
There are at least 78 species of skink in Aotearoa with more being discovered...

How to identify a skink:

- Has sleek and shiny scales
- Mostly lives on the ground
- Has small eyes
- Eyes have eyelids and they can blink
- Has smaller legs, is secretive and fast-moving

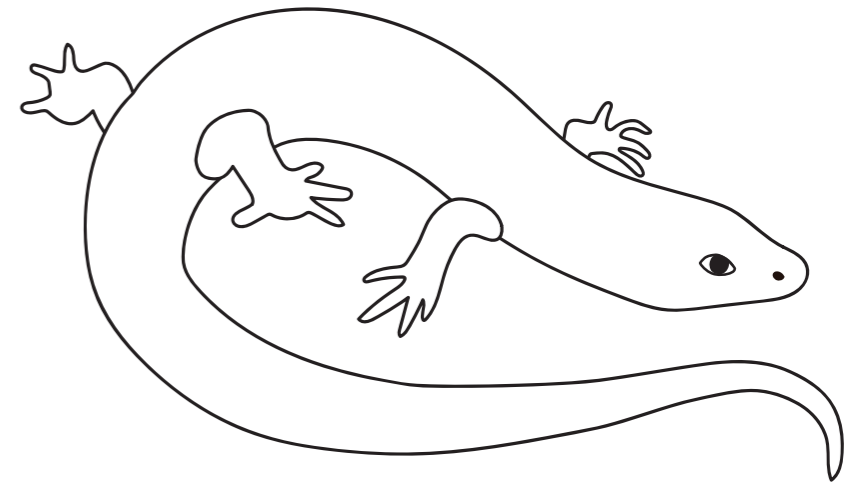


Design your own gecko...



What colours and patterns will you put on your gecko?

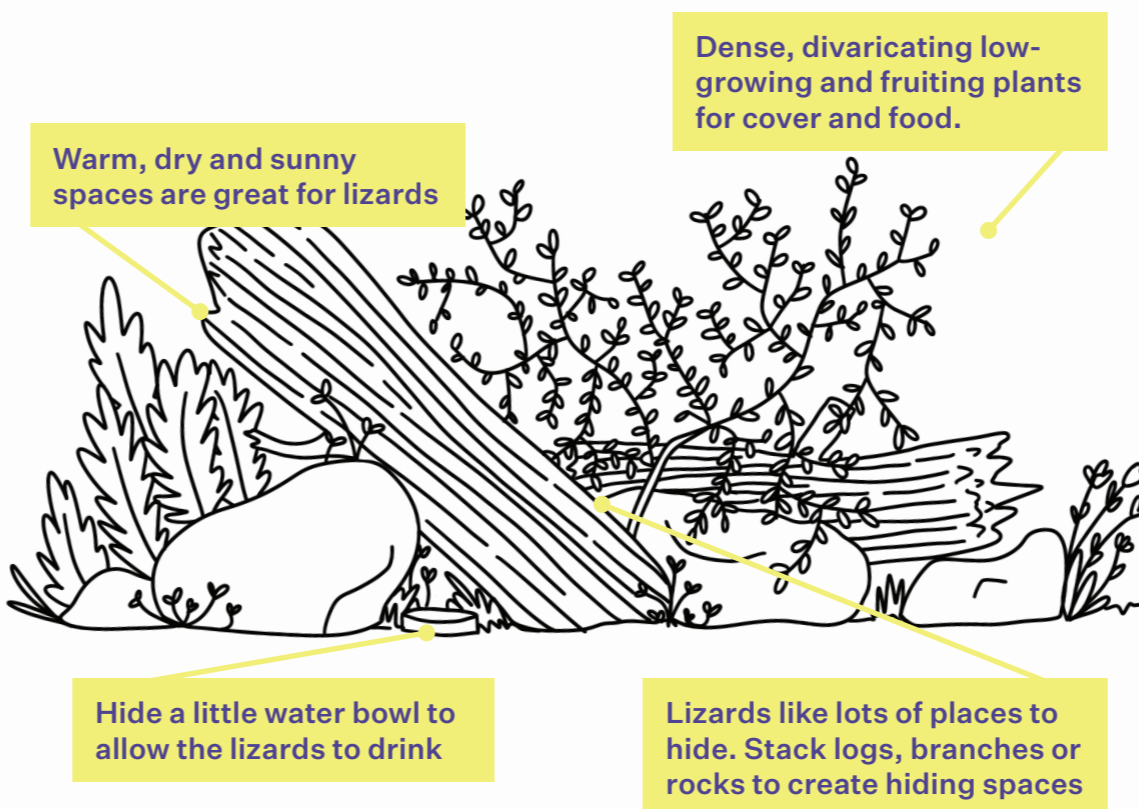
Design your own skink...



What colours and patterns will you put on your skink?

Create a lizard friendly garden

Check out how to make your garden at home or school a great place for lizards.



WILDWORK

Grand and Otago skinks...

A grand effort is required to save even the smallest species. When the grand and Otago skinks needed help to survive, four zoos across Aotearoa, including Auckland Zoo, joined together to salvage the skinks from their rugged habitat and coordinate a breeding programme.

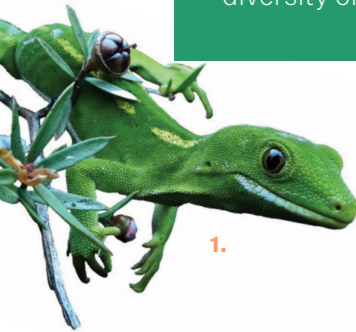
After a few years, all the skinks in the zoos were successfully released into a specially built predator-free fenced reserve near Alexandra where local community groups are monitoring them—and they're doing just great!



Lizards of AOTEAROA

Did you know there are 134 species of lizard in New Zealand... with more still being discovered!

Check out some of the amazing diversity of New Zealand lizards.



1. ELEGANT GECKO

Naultinus elegans

Historically known as the Auckland green gecko, the elegant gecko is found from Northland to Central North Island. It has a deep blue coloured mouth and a black tongue.

2. HARLEQUIN GECKO

Tukutuku rakiurae

This nocturnal gecko is found only in southern Rakiura (Stewart Island) and is Aotearoa's southernmost gecko species. It has a distinctive herringbone pattern and bright yellow eyes.

3. TE MOKOMOKO A TOHU

Hoplodactylus tohu

Until recently all living *Hoplodactylus* populations were known as Duvaucel's gecko. New research has shown that *Hoplodactylus* geckos living on rocky islands in the Cook Strait are different from the northern geckos.

These geckos have unique DNA, are smaller in size and have different patterns. This new species of gecko was named Te Mokomoko a Tohu in 2023.



4. MURIWAI GECKO

Woodworthia 'Muriwai'

This very rare and endangered gecko is found only between Muriwai and South Kaipara Head.

They are primarily nocturnal and live in the dune vegetation and coastal scrub. Auckland Zoo and Auckland Council are working together to understand the threats to this species and ensure their survival.

5. AWAKŌPAKA SKINK

Oligosoma awakopaka

Discovered in 2014, this extremely rare skink is only found in an area less than two hectares in size, in Fiordland National Park. Almost nothing is known about its natural history or numbers.

6. ROUGH GECKO

Naultinus rudis

This gecko gets its name from distinctive raised large scales that cover its back. It is cathemeral (active both day and night) although is predominantly active during the day spending a lot of time basking in the sun.



9. DUVAUCEL'S GECKO

Hoplodactylus duvaucelii

Can be over 30cm long and is New Zealand's largest gecko.

They have a large number of lamellae (a structure on footpads which allows adhesions onto surfaces), and long toes. Duvaucel's geckos vocalise by making squeaks, squeals, croaking and coughing sounds.

7. PACIFIC GECKO

Dactylocnemis pacificus

This nocturnal gecko has a strong prehensile tail which can act as an extra limb when moving through trees and shrubs.

8. TAUTUKU GECKO

Mokopirirakau species

The Tautuku geckos' markings provide great camouflage against lichen covered trees. This gecko can have brilliant blue eyes, but usually their eyes are brown or brown-grey. Found in Otago and Southland.

10. ROBUST SKINK

Oligosoma alani

Robust skink are Aotearoa's largest native skink and can reach up to 33cm long.

They are thick-bodied skinks with short limbs and toes. They were once found all over Aotearoa but have drastically reduced in numbers due to introduced predators and are now only found on predator-free islands.

11. NIHO TANIWHA CHEVRON SKINK

Oligosoma homalonotum

These are New Zealand's longest lizards and can reach up to 35cm long. They have a distinctive chevron pattern and are found only on Aotea (Great Barrier Island) and Te Hauturu-o-tio (Little Barrier Island).

12. BLACK-EYED GECKO

Mokopirirakau kahutarae

Found in the northern South Island and can live in harsh alpine zones, some have been found up to 2200 metres (above sea level) and may exist even higher. These geckos are primarily nocturnal, however, they are known to bask and possibly feed during the day.

13. EGG-LAYING SKINK

Oligosoma suteri

The egg-laying skink is Aotearoa's only oviparous (egg-laying) lizard. It lives on rocky coastlines and can dive and swim in the water. They have specialised nasal glands which secrete excess salts.



14. NORTHERN STRIPED GECKO

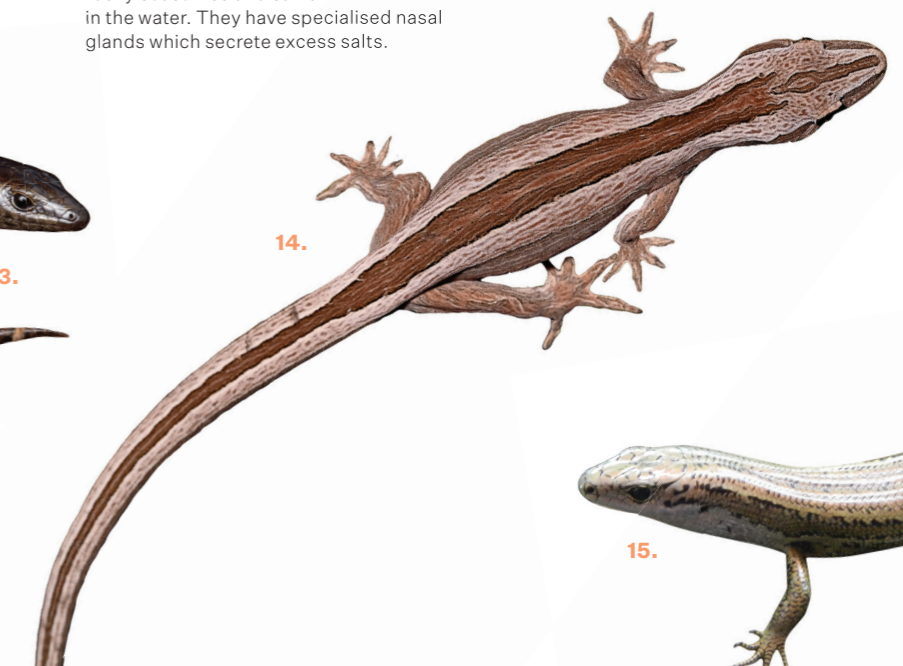
Toropuku inexpectatus

Found only on the Coromandel Peninsula these elusive gecko were discovered in 1997. Auckland Zoo staff carry out surveys 4 times a year at Mahakirau Forest Estate in the Coromandel to search for and collect data on these gecko to learn more about their natural history.

15. COBBLE SKINK

Oligosoma aff. infrapunctatum

In 2018, to prevent cobble skink extinction, DOC moved the entire known population (36 skinks) to Auckland Zoo. Shortly after their move, their coastal habitat was devastated by Cyclone Gita. Successful breeding has increased the Zoo population to around 150 skinks.



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