

# Look out FOR Lizards in Taranaki



© Dr Paddy Ryan

## Native And Special

- New Zealand has around 100 different species of native lizards
- At least 11 of these species (5 gecko and 6 skink) live in Taranaki
- All native NZ lizards (except for one skink species) have live young and are slow to reproduce
- They have a long life – native geckos have been found in the wild over 50 years old
- Having evolved without mammalian predators they are easy prey for cats and rats
- NZ lizards eat insects, fruit and nectar
- Lizards are important for our native ecosystems as:
  - tiny predators (eating insects and bugs)
  - prey (food for native birds)
  - pollinators and seed dispersers of many native plants



## Skinks and Geckos – whats the difference?



### Things to look out for:

#### Skinks

- Slender and shiny like a snake with legs
- No obvious neck
- Eyes that blink
- Narrow toes



#### Geckos

- Loose baggy skin like suede
- Have a 'neck'
- Large round eyes that don't blink – they lick their eyes to clean them
- Often have wide toe pads

## In Trouble

Over 75% of New Zealand's native lizards are threatened or At Risk.

Many are now restricted to offshore islands or areas with intensive predator control.



badcatchris.com

### Lizards are at risk from:

- **Predators**  
Cats, rats, mice, hedgehogs, mustelids (stoats, ferrets, weasels) and birds
- **Habitat destruction**  
Subdivision, construction, landscaping
- **Illegal collection and smuggling**
- **Competition and displacement**  
from introduced lizards (plague skink)

All Native lizards are protected under the WILDLIFE ACT 1953. This means they cannot be collected or kept without a permit. It is also an offence to kill them or destroy their habitat. Please consider our native lizards when removing vegetation or doing earthworks.

## ! Plague Skink (Australian Invader)

Plague skinks or rainbow skinks came from Australia and are spreading through NZ. They have only recently been confirmed in Taranaki.

- Plague skinks are agile and fast.
- They lay eggs and are able to reproduce quicker than our native species.
- They can build up large numbers quickly and take up all the best basking and feeding sites displacing our native species.
- Plague skinks are curious and inquisitive and often hitch rides by climbing into luggage, cars, plants etc.
- Their eggs are easily transported in potting mix and garden materials.



Lampropholis delicata

Further information: [www.doc.govt.nz/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/)

## Lizard Habitats



COASTAL WETLAND SHRUBLAND FOREST GRASSLAND URBAN

Native lizards live in a variety of habitats from down near the beach to up on the mountain.

Lizards need to be safe from predators in undisturbed places like:

- Grassy weedy areas
- Shady moist areas - leaf litter
- Rotting logs or old piles of timber or stones
- Stacks of bricks or pavers
- Crevices in walls and sheds
- Trees
- Clay banks
- Established foliage bushes
- Flowering native trees

## What You Can Do

- **Make your garden lizard friendly. Plant:**
  - Low growing and clump forming plants like toe toe, astelia and flax
  - Dense climbers (but not weeds)
  - Divaricating (many branched) native plants
  - Nectar producing plants like manuka, flax, pohutukawa, lacebark, pittosporums, rata
- **Create spaces for lizards to live:**
  - Rock piles
  - Logs and debris in garden
  - Leave areas of deep leaf litter and mulch
- **Reduce use of chemicals and sprays**  
Lizards eat insects and drink nectar!
- **Control predators**  
Especially rats, mice and stoats
- **Be responsible pet owners**  
Cats are very good lizard predators and can easily wipe out local lizard populations.
- **Report lizard sightings to DOC**

## International REPTILE AWARENESS DAY 21 October



Taranaki Lizard Group  
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NZ Herpetological Society  
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www.reptiles.org.nz



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Department of Conservation  
www.doc.govt.nz

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# Taranaki's Local Lizards

Photos: Trent Bell  
[NOT TO SCALE]



**Barking gecko**

*Naultinus punctatus*

**AT RISK**



**Goldstripe gecko**

*Woodworthia chrysosiretica*  
(Moko mangaeka)

**AT RISK**



**Pacific gecko**

*Dactylocnemis pacificus*

**AT RISK**



**Forest gecko**

*Mokopirirakau granulatus*

**AT RISK**



**Elegant gecko**

*Naultinus elegans*

**AT RISK**



**Brown skink**

*Oligosoma zelandicum*

**AT RISK**



**Kupe skink**

*Oligosoma aff. infrapunctatum*

**THREATENED**



**Striped skink**

*Oligosoma striatum*

**AT RISK**



**Northern grass skink**

*Oligosoma polychroma*



**Ornate skink**

*Oligosoma ornatum*

**AT RISK**



**Copper skink**

*Oligosoma aeneum*

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