



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Western Skink (*Plestiodon skiltonianus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Western Skink (Plestiodon skiltonianus)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/western-skink-plestiodon-skiltonianus/

By colliiek2

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Western skinks may look familiar. Did some of those old monster movies enlarged this modest five-inch lizard to fight Godzilla? Maybe they were hanging out in the garden.

Western skinks are just one of more than 2,500 lizard species in the world. Oregon has a variety of lizards, the most common of them being Western Skinks.



Western Skink (Courtesy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife)

Where to find them

Western skinks can often be found basking themselves on a warm rock in a wide variety of habitats. They favor rocky areas, such as riparian zones, with some moisture. Western skinks are good burrowers and may constructs moist burrows several times its own body length. Standing water is not required.

They avoid heavy brush and dense forests but can be found in coniferous woodlands and forests, and grasslands to desert scrubs. Their region is fairly large and includes Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, Missouri, and portions of Texas and California.

Chow's On

Western skinks consume a wide variety of invertebrates and arthropods including beetles, grasshoppers, sow bugs, moths, flies, spiders, and earthworms. The lizards forage and hunt through leaf litter, and are most active at night and in the early morning.

Drop Tail and Run

They belong to a special group of blue tongue lizards with smooth, glossy scales, and 'racing' stripes on its side (these lizards are fast and very agile). Juveniles are more vivid than adults and sport bright blue tails that fade with age to grey in adulthood.

When in a pinch, Skinks will literally ‘drop tail and run.’ They can detach their tail, which will whip and wiggle violently, giving the lizard a chance to escape. The tail will eventually grow back. Some lizards are known to break off their own tails and eat them when food is scarce.

REFERENCES:

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Lizards and Skinks (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/lizards-and-skinks>)
- Wikipedia, Western Skinks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_skink)
- Burke Museum Collection and Research (<https://www.burkemuseum.org/collections-and-research/biology/herpetology/amphibians-reptiles-washington/western-skink>)