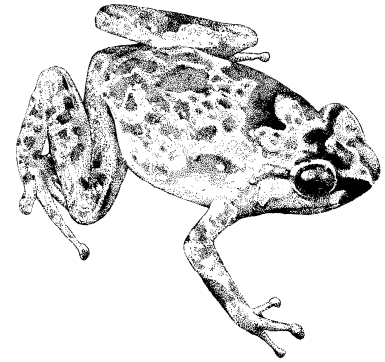


Tropical Factsheets

Vertebrates of the Cryptosphere

Frogs

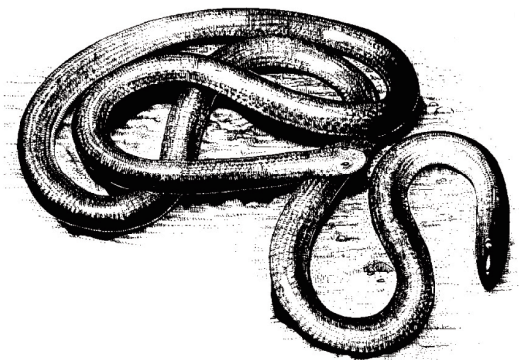
- Tiny leaf-litter frogs are called **microhylids**.
- **There are 12 species of microhylid frogs** in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland. (This is 75% of all the microhylids in Australia).
- You can find more detailed information about frogs in the fact sheets on **Frog Facts**, **Frog Pond** and **Frogs Croak**.



Frog

Blind Snakes

- Blind snakes (*Ramphotyphlops spp*) are small, worm-like, non-venomous snakes.
- There are about **eight species** of blind snakes in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.
- The larger species can grow to **40 cm** in length.
- Blind snakes spend most of their time in their **underground burrows** or in leaf litter, but some have permanent tunnels in ant and termite nests.
- When they move forward through their burrows they use a small **spine** on the end of the tail as an anchor.
- Blind snakes sometimes emerge into the open at **night** to cross hard surfaces, or when the earth is saturated by rain. (If their burrows become flooded they can swim and crawl up trees.)
- They feed mainly on **ants** and **termites**. They follow the scent trail of ants by flicking their **forked tongues**. They eat the adults, larvae, pupae and eggs.
- They have smooth, glossy brown bodies with **thick skin** which protects them from the stings of ants.



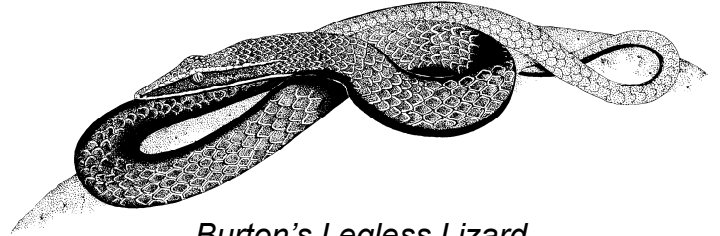
Blind Snake



- The larger blind snakes even feed on ferocious **bulldog ants**.
- They have **small eyes** below their body scales. These are just light sensitive spots capable of detecting light and dark.
- All blind snakes lay **eggs**.
- **Predators** of blind snakes include bandicoots, birds and other snakes. (The black and white striped bandy snake feeds only on blind snakes.)

Legless lizards

- Legless lizards have **no front legs**, and only **flap-like hind limbs**.
- Being legless, it is easy for them to burrow in soil and leaf litter and to enter small spaces.
- Legless skinks feed on insects and other invertebrates in the leaf litter, soil or beneath bark.
- They have no movable eyelids and **lick** their eyes to clean them.
- Legless lizards are **different from snakes** because they have broad, fleshy, **unforked** tongues, make **squeaky sounds**, have **external** ear openings, more **head scales**, and can **shed their tails** under stress. They regrow their tails at a later stage.
- Legless lizards can **mimic** venomous snakes, even though they are not poisonous.
- The **largest** legless lizard in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland is ***Delma mitella***. It grows up to **75** cm long. It is very **rare**, and occurs only at a few rainforest edges on the eastern side of the **Atherton Tableland** and **Paluma**. It lives under fallen timber or in decaying **logs**. It feeds on **insects** in the leaf litter. It lays **2** eggs per clutch.



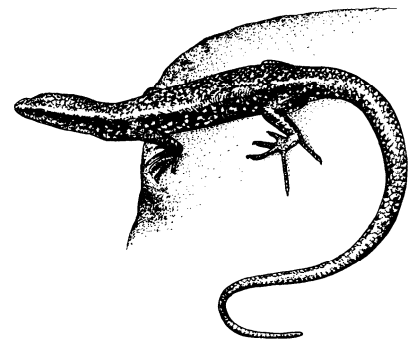
Burton's Legless Lizard

Skinks

- Most skinks **live** on the forest floor among the leaf litter. They also **shelter** under rotting logs and rocks.
- Most skinks hunt **insects** and other **small invertebrates** during the day in the leaf litter and fallen logs.
- Like most lizards, skinks depend on the external environment to keep their bodies within a certain **temperature** range. They have **flat bodies** to catch as much warmth as possible as they bask in the sun to raise their body temperature.



- Many skinks are able to **shed their tails** when caught by a predator. This process is called **autotomy**. They have **fracture planes** between the vertebrae in the tail. Muscles on either side of the planes pull in opposite directions and break the tail in two. Although most species can replace the tail, the new one has a rod of **cartilage** running through it instead of bone.
- Skinks are the most **numerous** and diverse group of lizards in the tropical rainforests of north Queensland.
- Most of them are **small** and **brown**, but the **Major's Skink** grows up to 40cm in length. They live in small colonies with parents and offspring all sharing a complex burrow system.
- The **smallest** skink in the tropical forests of north Queensland is ***Saproscincus tetradactyla***, which is about 6cm long.
- The most **common** skink in these forests is the **Red-throated Skink**. It grows up to 14cm long. Breeding males have **red necks**. Females lay one to two **eggs** per clutch, sometimes communally. They prey on **insects** and **small skinks**, including their **own species**. They **wave their tails** continually to encourage potential predators to target its detachable tail.
- The **Pink-tongued Skink** grows to a length of 31 cm. Some adults are unbanded, while the juveniles are **strongly banded**. They are **semi-nocturnal**. They are ground-dwelling but they can also climb low vegetation using their **prehensile tails**. They feed mainly on **insects** in the leaf litter. They produce up to **25 live young** per litter.
- The **Prickly Forest Skink** grows to a length of 17 cm. It is **endemic** to the tropical rainforests of north Queensland. They live in rotting logs in the dampest part of the rainforest. They are very **heat-sensitive**, and emerge to forage only around twilight and at night. They have very rough, prickly back **scales** which disperse moisture over its body.



Skink