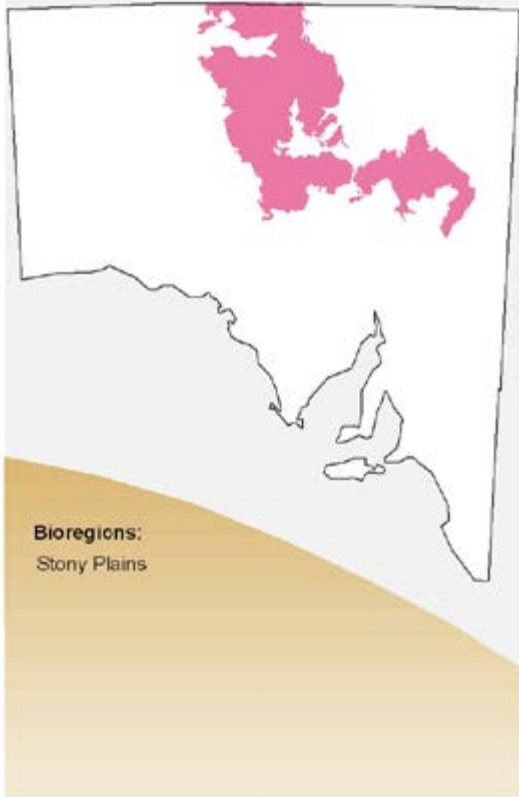


Bronzeback Snake-lizard

Ophidiocephalus taeniatus



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Biodiversity

Bronzeback Snake-lizards are a small species of legless lizard that live in areas of dense leaf litter along temporary watercourses. Slightly thinner than an average drinking straw, they can grow up to 27 cm long. They have long, blunt ended tails and a blunt snout which is wedge-shaped in profile. The bronze-rich fawn colour on their backs gives them their name, and they are a brownish-grey colour on their heads and bellies. Brown stripes run down either side from their snouts to the tips of their tails.

Diet

Bronzeback Snake-lizards eat various invertebrates including termites, cockroach nymphs, larvae of moths and beetles, and spiders. They also have large appetites for small reptiles and can eat surprisingly large prey. To do this they grab prey in their jaws and then roll over it to break it into smaller pieces. This method has been likened to a crocodile's "death roll".

Breeding

Not much is known about how these reptiles reproduce, but they are thought to mate in early spring and lay two eggs before January.

Habitat

Bronzeback Snake-lizards are only found in the Northern Territory and South Australia and have a patchy distribution. Highly secretive animals, Bronzebacks rarely come out of the deep leaf litter in which they live. This makes them hard to monitor and study. They were first recorded in the 1890s, and were not discovered again for more than 80 years.

Threats

Bronzeback Snake-lizards are sometimes trampled by cattle along water courses. Flooding events strip away surface soil and leaf litter that they need as habitat. Their small population size makes them vulnerable to extinction. Habitat loss, disturbance and modification are large threats to these reptiles. Soil compaction and erosion may also be a problem in their delicate habitats.



When handled, legless lizards make a high pitched squeak and shed their tails!

Conservation

Research is being undertaken into how this species copes with drought and floods, which can threaten their survival. Surveys are also being done to obtain a more accurate estimate of how many Bronzebacks exist in the wild.

You can help the Bronzeback Snake-lizard by:

- not disturbing leaf litter in the wild unless you need to as it provides habitat for a range of creatures
- raising awareness of the Bronzeback and how important watercourses are as habitats
- finding out more about this species and how legless lizards are different from snakes.



Photo by Tony Robinson

Bronzeback Snake-lizard



Photo by Tony Robinson

Bronzeback Snake-lizard

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524

