

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Animal Abstract

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CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Plestiodon "gilberti" arizonensis* Lowe and Shannon
COMMON NAME: Arizona Skink
SYNONYMS: *Eumeces gilberti arizonensis* (Lowe and Shannon 1954)
FAMILY: Sauria: Scincidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: de Queiroz and Reeder. 2008. Squamata: Lizards. *In* B. I. Crother (ed.), Scientific and Standard English Names of Amphibians and Reptiles of North America North of Mexico, pp. 24-45 SSAR Herpetological Circular 37. (*E. g. arizonensis* Lowe and Shannon, Herpetologica 10: 185-187. 1954.)

TYPE LOCALITY: Hassayampa River, 5 miles SE Wickenburg, Maricopa Co. AZ.

TYPE SPECIMEN: Unknown.

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: The following discussion for the genus *Plestiodon* and subsequent species and spp. *P. "gilberti" arizonensis*, is based on the revisions of Lizards by de Queiroz and Reeder (2008), *In* Crother (ed.).

***Plestiodon* Duméril and Bibron, 1839—Toothy skinks.** Brandley et al. (2005, Syst. Biol. 54: 373–390; see also Griffith, 1991, Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. Toronto; Griffith et al., 2000, Russ. J. Herpetol. 7: 1–16; Schmitz et al., 2004, Hamadryad 28: 73–89) presented evidence that *Eumeces* as formerly circumscribed is not monophyletic, and they resurrected the name *Plestiodon* for a clade containing all of the North American species north of Mexico (and East Asian species), for which Schmitz et al. (op. cit.) had incorrectly resurrected the name *Pariocela*. Taxonomy for *Plestiodon* (often as *Eumeces*) follows Taylor (1935, Univ. Kansas Sci. Bull. 23: 1–643) with modifications by Rodgers (1944, Copeia 1944: 101–104; description of *P. gilberti placerensis*), Smith (1946, Univ. Kansas Pub. Mus. Nat. Hist. 1: 85–89; resurrection of *P. anthracinus pluvialis*), Rodgers and Fitch (1947, Univ. California Pub. Zool. 48: 169–220; description of *P. gilberti cancellosus* and treatment of *P. skiltonianus brevipes* as a synonym of *P. gilberti gilberti*), Smith and Slater (1949, Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci. 52: 438–448; description of *P. septentrionalis pallidus*), McConkey (1957, Bull. Florida St. Mus. (Biol. Sci.) 2: 13–23; description of *P. egregius similis*), Lowe and Shannon (1954, Herpetologica 10: 185–187; description of *P. gilberti arizonensis*), Lowe (1955b, Herpetologica 11: 233–235; treatment of *P. gaigeae* as a subspecies of *P. multivirgatus*), Mecham (1957, Copeia 1957: 111–123; treatment of *P. taylori* as a synonym of *P. m. gaigeae*), Tanner (1958, Great Basin Nat. 17: 59–94; descriptions of *P. skiltonianus utahensis* and *P. s. interparietalis*), Axtell (1961, Texas J. Sci. 13: 345–351; see also Axtell and Smith, 2004, Southwest. Nat. 49: 100; priority of *P. multivirgatus epipleurotus* over *P. m. gaigeae*),

Mount (1965, The Reptiles and Amphibians of Alabama, Auburn Univ. Agric. Exper. Station; descriptions of *P. egregius lividus* and *P. e. insularis*), Lieb (1985, Contrib. Sci. Nat. Hist. Mus. Los Angeles Co. 357: 1–19; treatment of *P. brevilineatus*, *P. callicephalus*, and *P. tetragrammus* as subspecies of a single species), and those described in additional notes below. With the restriction of *Eumeces* to the former *E. schneideri* group (Brandley et al., op. cit.), the standard English name Great Skinks is appropriate for the members of that clade.

***P. "gilberti"* Van Denburgh, 1896—Gilbert's Skink.** Richmond and Reeder (2002, Evolution 56: 1498–1513) presented evidence that populations previously referred to *Plestiodon gilberti* represent three lineages that separately evolved large body size and the loss of stripes in late ontogenetic stages. Although they considered those three lineages to merit species recognition, they did not propose specific taxonomic changes. We have placed the name "*gilberti*" in quotation marks to indicate that it refers to a species complex.

***P. g. arizonensis* Lowe and Shannon, 1954—Arizona Skink**

P. g. cancellosus Rodgers and Fitch, 1947—Variegated Skink

P. g. gilberti Van Denburgh, 1896—Greater Brown Skink

P. g. placerensis Rodgers, 1944—Northern Brown Skink

P. g. rubricaudatus Taylor, 1935—Western Red-tailed Skink

DESCRIPTION: A medium sized lizard with snout to vent lengths of 2.0 – 4.5 inches (5-11 cm). Their limbs are small relative to their body size. They have a shiny, plain gray brown to olive tan coloring. Some adults have reddish orange coloration on the head and tail. Young animals have light and dark striping on the body, and orange to pink coloration under the tail. Most adults lack striping entirely. Stebbins (1966) and Behler and King (1979), both report that *P. g. arizonensis* adults tend to retain juvenile striped pattern.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Color drawing (Stebbins 1966: plate 24)

Color photo (Behler and King 1979: plates 430,434)

Color photo (Tom Brennan, <http://www.reptilesfaz.com/h-e-gilberti.html>)

Color photo of species (Robert Hansen, <http://www.enature.com/fieldguide/>)

TOTAL RANGE: The **species** occurs in California, south along Sierra Nevada and Coastal ranges from the San Francisco Bay to northern Baja California. Isolated populations occur in the Mountains of southeast California, southern Nevada, and west and west-central Arizona. The **subspecies** *arizonensis* occurs in west-central Arizona.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: West-central Arizona. Distribution is largely uncertain; currently documented only from riparian habitats along the perennial reaches of the Hassayampa River and its tributaries below Wickenburg in Maricopa County (AGFD in prep). Other areas that it has been reported from includes the Bradshaw and Santa Maria

mountains, Yavapai Co.; Burro Creek ca. 15km west Bagdad, Mohave Co.; Hualapai and Aquarius mountains, Mohave Co.

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: Arizona skinks are secretive diurnal lizards that spend most of their time under rocks and logs.

REPRODUCTION: An oviparous lizard, laying 5-9 eggs in an underground burrow/den during mid-summer.

FOOD HABITS: The Arizona skink eats insects and spiders.

HABITAT: Occurs among rocks, logs and leaf litter near permanent or semi-permanent streams, in habitats ranging from mesquite riparian drainages up through oak and into pine woodlands. In the Bradshaw Mountains, they can be found in evergreen woodland and pine forests, while along the Hassayampa River, they are found in riparian woodland habitats.

ELEVATION: 1,865 – 1,970 ft (569-601 m).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Unknown

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown but believed to be locally common and probably stable. May be severely decreasing in some localities.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:

None (USDI, FWS 1996)
[C2 USDI, FWS 1994]
[C2 USDI, FWS 1991]
[C2 USDI, FWS 1989]
[3C USDI, FWS 1985]

STATE STATUS:

WSC (AGFD, WSCA in prep)
[State Endangered (AGFD, TNW 1988)]

OTHER STATUS:

Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1999)
[Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1988)]
None (USDI, BLM AZ 2005)
[Bureau of Land Management Sensitive (USDI, BLM AZ 2000)]

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: *P. g. arizonensis* has a limited distribution. Habitat loss in riparian localities is a concern. Threats include water diversion and habitat destruction, including loss of flood-deposited debris used as cover (AGFD in prep).

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN: Habitat acquisition of perennial reach of Hassayampa River by TNC.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Distribution, habitat, population and life history studies.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: TNC – Hassayampa River Preserve; Private.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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