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SKINKS

South-western Crevice Skink

Egernia napoleonis

A medium-sized, flat-bodied, diurnal skink from the rocks and forests of south-western Australia. *Egernia napoleonis* hides in crevices under bark and stones and gives birth to live young. Almost no documented knowledge exists on keeping it in captivity, so this guide draws on the species in the wild and on the close relatives *Egernia striolata*, *Egernia cunninghami* and *Egernia kingii*.

Family: Scincidae Former name: *Tiliqua napoleonis; Contundo napoleonis; Egernia bos*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**13-14 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Rocky terrain and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**100 × 50 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**25-30 °C**
Basking spot	**35-40 °C**
Temperature, night	**14-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects, fruit and plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Litter size	**1-6 young**
Clutches per year	**1**
Gestation	**90-120 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix III**
EU annex	**Annex C**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

About the species

Egernia napoleonis is a stoutly built but relatively flattened skink. The upperparts are olive-brown with small, dark spots arranged in three longitudinal rows along the back, and a broad, pale zone runs along the sides. The dorsal scales are strongly keeled with two to four sharp ridges per scale. The upper lips are whitish and the belly is salmon to orange-brown. Adults average 13-14 cm snout-vent length. Total length and weight are not documented.

The species belongs to the Australian *Egernia* group of large skinks and is most closely related to *Egernia striolata*. It is distinguished from *Egernia kingii* by the pale upper lips and the pinkish belly. The scientific species name refers to Terre Napoléon, an old name for parts of southern Australia. The species was described in 1838 by John Edward Gray. Lifespan is not documented for the species itself; close relatives live 10-20 years, and the figure in the box is borrowed from them. Sexual maturity is not documented.

Distribution and habitat

Egernia napoleonis occurs only in south-western Western Australia, from the coastal plain at the Swan River and the jarrah forests of the south-west to the coastal plains around Esperance, and on islands in the Recherche Archipelago. The species is common and not threatened.

Australia does not permit the export of wild reptiles, so all animals in trade outside Australia are captive-bred.

Read more: Buying animals: captive-bred, wild-caught and transport

> **Native range:** Australia.

HABITAT

The habitat is open forest, open heath, scrub and rock outcrops in a temperate, Mediterranean-type climate with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The species is diurnal and both climbs and lives among rocks: it hides under loose bark and in crevices in rocks and trees.

What the species eats in the wild has not been described in detail. The close relatives in the *Egernia* group are omnivorous, with a large proportion of insects and plants.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Almost no documented knowledge exists on the care of *Egernia napoleonis*. The recommendations draw on the climate of its range, on its habitat and on the close relatives *Egernia striolata*, *Egernia cunninghami* and *Egernia kingii*, which have the same requirements for light, heat and furnishing. Figures are borrowed from them unless stated otherwise.

Egernia napoleonis climbs and creeps into crevices, so height and the number of hides matter more than floor area. A pair needs at least 100 × 50 × 60 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better. The size lies between those for the smaller *Egernia striolata* and the larger *Egernia cunninghami*.

Build many narrow crevices at several heights from flat pieces of cork, slate slabs leaned against the back wall, a stack of thin slabs with narrow gaps, and branches, so the animal can hide under something resembling bark and rock cracks. Place stones directly on the floor of the enclosure so they cannot be undermined. The substrate can be a mix of soil, coconut fibre and bark at least 10 cm deep; avoid fine sand on its own, because it can cause eye irritation and intestinal impaction. Provide a large, flat basking stone and a stable water dish. The enclosure must be well ventilated and have a tight, escape-proof lid.

TEMPERATURE

By day the air should be 25-30 °C with a clear gradient from the cool end to the warm end. Under a halogen spot lies a flat stone or branch whose surface should reach 35-40 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer. At night the temperature may fall to 14-20 °C.

The daytime and basking figures are borrowed from *Egernia striolata* and *Egernia cunninghami*, the night figures from *Egernia kingii*, which lives in the same part of Australia. Shorter days and slightly lower temperatures in winter follow the climate of its range. Whether a proper winter rest is necessary in captivity is not documented.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

Humidity should be 40-60 %. Mist the enclosure lightly a couple of times a week, and keep the substrate slightly damp under one hide in the cool end, so the animal can choose. A dish of fresh water should always be available. Change the water daily and wash the dish weekly. The figures are borrowed from *Egernia cunninghami* and *Egernia kingii*.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

Egernia napoleonis is diurnal and needs UVB for as long as the light is on. A UVB tube in a reflector over the basking area, covering about half the length of the enclosure, gives Ferguson Zone 3. The zone is borrowed from *Egernia striolata* and *Egernia cunninghami*. Position the basking area so that the animal's back is at least 20 cm from the tube; the distance depends on the strength of the tube. UVB does not pass through glass or plastic, and tubes should be replaced according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Supplement with bright, white daylight. The light period is about 14 hours in summer and 12 hours in winter.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

The diet is not documented for *Egernia napoleonis*, so feeding follows the close relatives: an omnivorous diet with plenty of insects and a good deal of plant material.

Offer insects such as cockroaches, crickets, locusts and mealworms, as well as snails. Add greens and wild plants such as dandelion, clover and endive, chopped vegetables such as courgette and sweet potato, flowers and a little fruit as a treat. Wash all greens and wild plants before offering them.

Juveniles are fed daily, adults three times a week in small portions, alternating greens and animal food. Dust insects and greens lightly with calcium, and give a vitamin supplement once a week. A diet high in meat and fat leads to obesity.

Read more: Feeder animals: keeping and breeding Read more: Calcium, vitamins and supplements

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Egernia napoleonis is a diurnal skink that uses crevices as hides and climbs on bark and rocks. Close relatives in the same group, such as *Egernia striolata*, live in family groups. Whether this applies to *Egernia napoleonis* is not documented. Keep the animals singly or in pairs, therefore, and add new animals only after quarantine and under supervision. Separate the animals if they fight.

The animals are not suited to much handling. Calm behaviour and fixed routines reduce stress.

Read more: Quarantine and hygiene

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Age and size at sexual maturity are not documented for *Egernia napoleonis*. The sexes are difficult to tell apart externally, and reliable sexing requires a vet with experience of reptiles.

MATING

The course of mating and any winter rest before mating are not documented. A cooler period with shorter days in winter matches the climate of its range.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The species gives birth to live young. Litter size, how often the female gives birth and the time of year are not documented. Close relatives have 1-6 young once a year, and the figure in the box is borrowed from them. The young are born fully developed and fend for themselves from the first day, but they need narrow hides where the adults cannot chase them.

INCUBATION

There are no eggs to incubate. The length of gestation is not documented; the 3-4 months in the box are borrowed from *Egernia stokesii* and *Egernia hosmeri*. Give the pregnant female extra food, calcium and UVB, and keep the enclosure quiet. There must be flat hides where she can give birth.

REARING THE YOUNG

Size and weight at birth are not documented. Give the young an enclosure with many narrow hides, UVB and small insects and finely chopped greens daily, dusted with calcium. Keep the young under supervision, and separate them from the adults if aggression is seen.

Health and common mistakes

Egernia napoleonis is presumed to be hardy when temperature, light and substrate are right, like its close relatives. The typical problems in skinks in captivity are:

- Calcium deficiency and metabolic bone disease from too little UVB and a one-sided diet.
- Obesity from too much fatty food and too little exercise.
- Fungal infection of the belly and feet from a persistently damp substrate.
- Internal and external parasites, especially in new animals.

- Fighting injuries and stress from overcrowded or unsettled housing.

Quarantine new animals for at least a month before they are housed with others. The animals hide illness well, so contact a vet with experience of reptiles if there is a change in appetite, weight loss or swellings.

Read more: Common diseases and signs of illness

Always ask someone who knows

This guide is a good place to start, but it cannot replace experience. Animals differ, and much of what matters most is learned from people who have kept the species for years. Talk to a breeder, an experienced keeper or a vet who knows reptiles and amphibians before you get the animal - and again if anything looks wrong.