

SAND SKINK

Plestiodon reynoldsi

Order: Squamata
Family: Scincidae
FNAI Ranks: G3/S3
U.S. Status: Threatened
FL Status: Threatened



Description: A small, cylindrical, beige to grayish, nearly legless lizard with smooth, shiny scales. Adults 4 - 5 in. (100 - 330 mm) total length. Forelegs tiny, each with only a single toe, and fitting into a groove on lower body; hind legs slightly larger and with two toes. Snout wedge-shaped, eyes tiny, ear openings absent. Species' presence readily detected by distinctive sine-wave trails left in sand as lizard "swims" just beneath surface.

Similar Species: Two other small skinks, the ground skink (*Scincella lateralis*) and two subspecies of the mole skink (*Eumeces egregius lividus* [see species account] and *E. e. onocrepis*), occur within or near the range of the sand skink. Both have relatively small but fully developed limbs, with five toes on each foot. The ground skink is widespread and is bronze to brown, with a dark lateral stripe and light belly. Mole skinks vary geographically, but typically have light dorsolateral stripes and a tail that is different in color (e.g., red, yellow, blue) from the body. All salamanders lack scales.

Habitat: Principally rosemary scrub, but also in sand pine and oak scrubs, scrubby flatwoods, turkey oak ridges within scrub, and even along edges of citrus groves occupying former scrub. Requires loose sand (for burrowing) with large patches of sparse to no groundcover or canopy; scattered shrubs and lichens often present.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round, but difficult to observe. Most active March - June.

Florida Distribution: Central Ridge, from Marion to Highlands County. Most abundant on Lake Wales and Winter Haven ridges in Polk and Highlands counties; relatively rare and localized on Mount Dora Ridge in Marion and Lake counties.

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Range-wide Distribution: Same as Florida distribution.

Conservation Status: Occurs within a series of disjunct state, federal, and private conservation lands. Most original habitat destroyed for citrus and development.

Protection and Management: Management may entail infrequent prescribed fire. Include protection of native scrub as a major management objective of Ocala National Forest.

References: Ashton and Ashton 1991, Bartlett and Bartlett 1999, Conant and Collins 1991, Moler (ed.) 1992, Telford 1959, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1987.



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