

# Common Five-lined Skink

*Plestiodon fasciatus*



**Muskoka**  
WATERSHED COUNCIL

*Status:* **Special Concern**

## *Threats:*

- ♦ Habitat loss due to development
- ♦ Habitat degradation as woody debris and rocks are removed from properties
- ♦ Road mortality
- ♦ Pet trade



**Adult Male**  
Photo: Joe Crowley



**Juvenile**  
Photo: Scott Gillingwater

## *Description:*

- ♦ Ontario's only species of lizard
- ♦ Small, smooth body
- ♦ Size up to 20 cm
- ♦ Juveniles: black with five creamy or yellowish stripes running from the head down the back; tail is bright blue
- ♦ Adults: colour dulls to brown or grey and stripes become beige and less distinct; tail is grey
- ♦ Adult males have reddish-orange jaws and chin
- ♦ Distinguished from salamanders by presence of scales, claws and ear openings

## *Biology:*

- ♦ Can live up to 5 years
- ♦ Lays 6-10 eggs in late May-early June within rotting logs or under rocks
- ♦ Very active diurnal predators
- ♦ Eats insects, spiders, worms and snails
- ♦ Darts quickly from place to place
- ♦ Tail can come off when attacked and will grow back
- ♦ hibernates in groups under rocks or tree stumps and in rotting wood

## *Habitat:*

- ♦ Found in the Georgian Bay area along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield
- ♦ Prefers rocky areas where cracks offer shelter and nesting sites, open wooded areas with ground cover (leaf litter, rotting logs, rocks and brush piles) and areas of sandy soil
- ♦ Favourite basking areas include stumps, logs, rocks, or outcroppings

Species at Risk  
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

# Common Five-lined Skink

## *Plestiodon fasciatus*

Status: **Special Concern**

### *Five-lined Skink on Your Property?* **Here's What You Can Do:**

- ♦ **Keep your distance.** If you ever find a skink on your property, observe it from a distance and leave it alone.
- ♦ **Maintain skink habitat.** Cover rocks (flat, relatively thin, mid sized rocks) are valuable real estate for a skink. Building inukshuks and other structures out of these rocks destroys skink habitat. Try to leave these types of rocks in place.
- ♦ **Create skink habitat.** Provide rock piles, woody debris piles and other preferable microhabitat elements in your yard and in the natural areas between adjacent cottages. Logs or artificial objects like boards can be provided for nesting areas. Replace materials as they degrade over time.
- ♦ **Keep a close eye on pets.** House cats can kill great numbers of these lizards and may even eliminate entire populations. Affix a bell on your cat's collar to prevent it from stalking wildlife. Strange behaviour by your dog could mean that it is harassing a skink.
- ♦ **Observe.** Take note of skinks basking in open areas such as trails, rock outcrops, and grassy natural areas on your property. Avoid disturbing these areas as much as possible.
- ♦ **See a skink?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at [nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species\\_report.cfm](http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm).
- ♦ **Learn more.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).



Adult Female  
Photo: Scott Gillingwater

### *Is it a **Skink** or a **Salamander**?*

*Skinks are reptiles and their skin is covered with smooth, shiny scales. Salamanders are amphibians and have a moist, permeable skin.*

*Skinks hatch as miniature replicas of their parents, while the young of salamanders hatch as larvae from eggs that are laid under water.*

## STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES



Adult Male  
Photo: Patrick Coin



Juvenile



Photo: Patrick Coin



Juvenile



Adult Male  
Photo: Scott Gillingwater