



\*Photo Credit: Patty Smith

## African/Mabuya Skink Species (*Mabuya spp.*), (*Eutropis spp.*), (*Lampropholis spp.*), and (*Trachylepis spp.*)

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### **Inexpensive, but Underrated**

In the pet trade, “assorted” skink species that appear regularly consist of several similar underrated genera and species which can vary considerably in size, coloration, and appearance depending on the species, age, sex, and reproductive status of the animal. Most of the species are from Africa as well. Several of these genera, such as *Mabuya spp.*, have traditionally been used as waste bin taxonomy to place a number of species that do not fit well elsewhere, and is often under taxonomic reassessment. In general though, these are small to large sized skinks with a semi-elongated, cylindrical bodies, reduced to sometimes absent limbs, and smooth to semi-keeled scales. Ground color can range from blackish, tan, bronze, olive or olive-gray, light to dark brown, or bronze. Depending on the species, these skinks may have stripes, streaks, speckles, dashes, bands, or be mostly uniformly colored.

During the mating and reproductive season, males of several species will also develop broad, vibrantly reddish to reddish orange heads and/or jaws as well. Juveniles and females of many species can also have vibrantly blue to pinkish colored tails as well. These skinks will readily practice caudal autotomy, which involves voluntarily dropping all or parts of their tails to distract potential predators, and which will regenerate several days to weeks later (although not as colorful or natural as the original tail).

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Squamata

**Suborder:** Lacertilia

**Infraorder:** Scincomorpha

**Family:** Scincidae

**Genus:** *Lampropholis*, *Trachylepis*, *Mabuya*, and *Eutrophis*

**Species:** *Lampropholis spp.\**, *Trachylepis spp.\**, *Mabuya spp.\**, and *Eutrophis spp.\**

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the correct care, these skinks can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years, or slightly more.

## **Species**

Each of the listed genera above consist of numerous species. However, some, among others, which may appear as “African skinks” in the pet trade can include, but are not limited to many similar species such as the Golden Skink or East African Brown Mabuya (*E. multifasciata*), Keeled Indian or Many Keeled Grass Skink (*E. carinata*), African Red Sided Skink (*T. perrotetii*), Five Lined or Rainbow Mabuya (*T. quinquetaeniata*) and (*T. margaritifera*), Cape Skink (*T. capensis*), African Striped Skink (*T. striata*), among others which may appear.

## **Distribution and Habitat**

These skinks can occur in a variety of habitats depending on the species, which can include arid to semi-arid deserts and scrublands, tropical to sub-tropical and/or mixed forests, woodlands, woodlots, swamp and wetland margins, river and wetland margins, open grasslands, savannahs, and plains, rocky foothills, and other humid to semi-moist forested areas. Depending on the species and genera, these skinks generally range over much of Africa, the Middle East, and southern to southeastern Asia, although it would be difficult to go into specific geographic distributions of each of the species here. Further range information is highly dependent upon the genera and species of these skinks.

## **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

## **Size**

These skinks can vary in size depending on the exact species, but most species range from 2.0 to 8.0 inches in total snout-to-tail length. Some of the larger species however can reach up to 12.0 to 18.0 inches or greater in total snout-to-tail length. Snout to vent length in *Mabuya spp.* varies depending on the species, from 2.0 to 8.0 inches in snout-to-vent length (SVL). In *Eutrophis spp.*, snout-to-vent length varies depending on the species from 1.9 to 6.3 inches snout-to-vent length (SVL). In *Lampropholis spp.*, snout to vent length varies on the species, from 1.3 to 2.2 inches (SVL). For *Trachylepis spp.*, snout to vent length varies on the species, from 1.7 to 7.0 inches (SVL).

## **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Fossorial.*** Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Depending on the age, size, or species, anywhere from a 10 to 40 gallon long terrarium or similar sized plastic or glass enclosure should be used. Most species of these skinks can be housed in pairs or in multiples in accordingly larger quarters, but males of most species can become territorial and may fight. Provide these skinks with substrates that enable burrowing such as fine aspen shavings, cypress mulch, or orchid bark. Also be sure to provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, cork bark, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. Provide a small bowl or dish of fresh water as well, and be sure to clean and replace it at least two to three times weekly or if dirtied. Misting once to twice weekly will also help maintain humidity at around 60 to 80% that these skinks will enjoy.

## **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Ideal temperatures for these skinks range from 75 to 85 degrees F on the cool side and about 90 to 95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. The precise temperature and humidity requirements will also vary somewhat depending on the species being maintained and their geographic distributions. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of North American

skinks in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. These skinks should be maintained at moderate to high levels of relative humidity of 60 to 75%, which may vary depending on the species.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Insectivorous to Omnivorous to Carnivorous Depending on Species***; In the wild, these skinks are primarily insectivorous, meaning they will eat insects, arachnids, worms, and other invertebrates, as well as occasionally other small vertebrates. In captivity, feed these species of skinks a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, fruit fly cultures, or waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. These skinks also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Other feeder items, such as small, pre-killed rodents can also be given on occasion, but sparingly. Overall feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Although many of these skinks can initially be skittish, they can become very bold and accustomed to regular human interaction, and can often even be hand fed. However, captive bred specimens are still quite infrequent, with most being wild caught. As such, many can still be nervous or skittish, especially when handling is attempted. Some very well acclimated specimens may be able to be handled or held gently for short periods of time, but are often faster moving and flightier species when in hand. Care should therefore be taken to not accidentally drop these animals when handling them. This is especially the case with these skinks, which may practice caudal autotomy by dropping all or portions of their tails when frightened or roughly handled. Overall, most of these species of skinks are hardy and easily kept and cared for, but as far as handling, are better suited for display and viewing (particularly larger adult male specimens).

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

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*Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal*

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### **Appendix 1-Full List of Mabuya Species-9 species:**

- Mabuya cochonae- Cochon's Skink
- Mabuya desiradae- Désirade Skink
- Mabuya dominicana- Dominica Skink
- Mabuya grandisterrae- Grande-Terre Skink
- Mabuya guadeloupae- Guadeloupe Skink
- Mabuya hispaniolae- Hispaniolan two-lined Skink
- Mabuya mabouya- Greater Martinique Skink
- Mabuya montserratae- Montserrat Skink
- Mabuya parviterrae- Petite Terre Skink

### **Appendix 2-Full List of Eutropis Species-44 species:**

- Eutropis allapallensis-Allapalli grass Skink, Schmidt's Mabuya
- Eutropis andamanensis-Andaman Islands grass Skink
- Eutropis ashwamedhi-Ashwamedh writhing Skink, Ashwamedha Supple Skink
- Eutropis austini
- Eutropis beddomei- Beddome's Mabuya
- Eutropis bibronii-Bibron's Skink, Seashore Skink
- Eutropis bontocensis-Luzon Montane Mabuya
- Eutropis borealis
- Eutropis caraga-Caraga Sun Skink
- Eutropis carinata-Keeled Indian Mabuya, Many-Keeled Grass Skink, "Golden Skink"
- Eutropis chapaensis-Sapa Mabuya
- Eutropis clivicola-Inger's Mabuya
- Eutropis cumingi-Cuming's Mabuya, Cuming's Eared Skink
- Eutropis cuprea-Copper Sun Skink
- Eutropis darevskii-Darevsky's Mabouya
- Eutropis dattaroyi
- Eutropis dissimilis-Striped Grass Mabuya, Striped Grass Skink
- Eutropis englei-Six-Striped Mabuya
- Eutropis floweri-Taylor's Striped Mabuya
- Eutropis gansi-Gans's Grass Skink
- Eutropis greeri
- Eutropis gubataas-Upland Sun Skink
- Eutropis indepressa-Brown's Mabuya
- Eutropis innotata-Blanford's Mabuya
- Eutropis islamaliit Striking Philippine Sun Skink
- Eutropis lapulapu-Lapu-lapu's Sun Skink
- Eutropis lewisi-Lewis's Mabuya
- Eutropis longicaudata-Longtail Mabuya, Long-Tailed Sun Skink
- Eutropis macrophthalma
- Eutropis macularia-Bronze Mabuya, Bronze Grass Skink

- Eutropis madaraszi*-Sri Lanka Bronze Mabuya
- Eutropis multicaudata*
- Eutropis multifasciata*-East Indian Brown Mabuya, Many-Lined Sun Skink, Many-Striped Skink, Common Sun Skink, Golden Skink
- Eutropis nagarjunensis*-Sharma's Mabuya
- Eutropis palauensis*-Palau Sun Skink
- Eutropis quadratilobus*
- Eutropis quadricarinata*-Beautiful Mabuya
- Eutropis rudis*-Rough Mabuya, Brown Mabuya
- Eutropis rugifera*-Nicobar Island Skink, Sulawesi Bronze Bush Skink
- Eutropis sahyulianghangan*-Palawan Sun Skink
- Eutropis sibilom*-Sibilom Sun Skink
- Eutropis tammanna*-Tammanna Skink
- Eutropis trivittata*-Three-Banded Mabuya
- Eutropis tytleri*-Tytler's Mabuya

### **Appendix 3-Full List of Lampropholis Species-14 species:**

- Lampropholis adonis*-Diamond-Shielded SunSkink
- Lampropholis amicalis*-Friendly SunSkink
- Lampropholis bellendenkerensis*
- Lampropholis caligula*-Montane SunSkink
- Lampropholis coggeri*-Rainforest SunSkink
- Lampropholis colossus*-Bunya SunSkink
- Lampropholis couperi*-Plain-Backed SunSkink
- Lampropholis delicata*-Delicate Skink, Rainbow Skink, Garden Skink, Delicate Grass Skink
- Lampropholis elliotensis*
- Lampropholis elongata*-Long SunSkink, Elongate SunSkink
- Lampropholis guichenoti*-Common Garden Skink, Pale-Flecked Garden SunSkink, Grass Skink, Guichenot's Grass Skink
- Lampropholis mirabilis*-Saxicoline SunSkink
- Lampropholis robertsi*-Grey-Bellied SunSkink
- Lampropholis similis*

### **Appendix 4: Full List of Trachylepis Species-87 species:**

- Trachylepis acutalabris*-Wedge-Snouted Skink, Sharp-Lipped Mabuya
- Trachylepis adamastor*-Adamastor Skink
- Trachylepis affinis*-Senegal Mabuya
- Trachylepis albilabris*-Guinea Mabuya
- Trachylepis albotaeniata*-Pemba Island Mabuya
- Trachylepis atlantica*-Noronha Skink
- Trachylepis aureogularis*-Guinea Mabuya, Orange-Throated Skink
- Trachylepis aureopunctata*-Gold-Spotted Mabuya
- Trachylepis bayonii*-Bayão's Skink, Bayon's Skink, Bayon's Mabuya
- Trachylepis bensonii*-Benson's Mabuya
- Trachylepis betsileana*-Betsileo Mabuya
- Trachylepis binotata*-Ovambo Tree Skink, Bocage's Mabuya
- Trachylepis bocagii*-Bocage's Skink
- Trachylepis boettgeri*-Boettger's Mabuya
- Trachylepis boulengeri*-Boulenger's Mabuya
- Trachylepis brauni*-Braun's Mabuya

- Trachylepis brevicollis*-Short-Necked Skink, Sudan Mabuya
- Trachylepis buettneri*
- Trachylepis capensis*-Cape Skink, Cape Three-Lined Skink
- Trachylepis casuarinae*-Casuarina Island Skink
- Trachylepis chimbana*-Chimba Skink, Chimban Mabuya
- Trachylepis comorensis*-Comoro Island Skink
- Trachylepis cristinae*-Abd Al Kuri Skink
- Trachylepis damarana*-Damara Skink
- Trachylepis depressa*-Eastern Sand Skink
- Trachylepis dichroma*-Two-Colored Skink
- Trachylepis dumasi*
- Trachylepis elegans*-Elegant Mabuya
- Trachylepis ferrarai*-Ferrara's Mabuya
- Trachylepis gonwouoi*-Gonwouo's Skink
- Trachylepis gravenhorstii*-Gravenhorst's Mabuya
- Trachylepis hemming*-Somali Mabuya
- Trachylepis hildebrandtii*-Hildebrandt's Skink
- Trachylepis hoeschi*-Hoesch's Mabuya
- Trachylepis homalocephala*-Red-Sided Skink
- Trachylepis infralineata*
- Trachylepis irregularis*-Alpine Meadow Mabuya
- Trachylepis keroanensis*
- Trachylepis lacertiformis*-Bronze rock Skink
- Trachylepis laevigata*-Variable Skink, Striped-Neck Variable Skink
- Trachylepis laevis*-Angolan blue-tailed Skink
- Trachylepis langheldi*-Langheld's Skink
- Trachylepis lavarambo*
- Trachylepis loluiensis*-Loloui Island Skink
- Trachylepis maculata*-Spotted Mabuya
- Trachylepis maculilabris*-Speckle-Lipped Skink, Speckle-Lipped Mabuya
- Trachylepis madagascariensis*-Malagasy Mabuya
- Trachylepis makolowodei*-Makolowodé's trachylepis
- Trachylepis margaritifera*-Rainbow Skink
- Trachylepis megalura*-Grass-Top Skink, Long-Tailed Skink
- Trachylepis mekuana*
- Trachylepis mlanjensis*-Mulanje Skink
- Trachylepis monardi*-Monard's Skink
- Trachylepis nancycoutuae*
- Trachylepis nganghae*
- Trachylepis occidentalis*-Western Three-Striped Skink
- Trachylepis ozorii*
- Trachylepis paucisquamis*-Tropical Mabuya
- Trachylepis pendearia*
- Trachylepis perrotetii*-African Red-Sided Skink
- Trachylepis planifrons*-Tree Skink
- Trachylepis polytropis*-Tropical Mabuya
- Trachylepis principensis*
- Trachylepis pulcherrima*-Beautiful Skink
- Trachylepis punctatissima*-Montane Speckled Skink, Speckled Rock Skink
- Trachylepis punctulata*-Speckled Sand Skink, Speckled Skink
- Trachylepis quinquetaeniata*-African Five-Lined Skink, Rainbow Mabuya
- Trachylepis raymondlaurenti*-Laurent's Long-Tailed Skink

- Trachylepis rodenburgi*-Rodenburg's Mabuya
- Trachylepis sechellensis*-Seychelles Mabuya
- Trachylepis socotrana*-Socotra Skink
- Trachylepis sparsa*-Karasburg Tree Skink
- Trachylepis spilogaster*-Kalahari Tree Skink, Spiny Mabuya
- Trachylepis striata*-African Striped Mabuya, Striped Skink
- Trachylepis sulcata*-Western Rock Skink
- Trachylepis tandrefana*
- Trachylepis tavaratra*
- Trachylepis tessellata*-Tessellated Mabuya
- Trachylepis thomensis*
- Trachylepis varia*-Variable Skink
- Trachylepis variegata*-Variegated Skink
- Trachylepis vato*-Boulder Mabuya
- Trachylepis vezo*
- Trachylepis volamenaloha*
- Trachylepis wahlbergii*-Wahlberg's striped Skink
- Trachylepis wingati*-Wingate's Skink
- Trachylepis wrightii*-Wright's Skink, Wright's Mabuya