



Dillon Damuth

Schneider's or Berber's Skink (*Eumeces schneideri*)

Painted Skinks of Africa and Asia

The Schneider's skink is sometimes also known as the Berber's skink, which has recently been elevated to full species status from subspecies. A medium to large, moderately built, and primarily diurnal and terrestrial medium sized skink, this species has a short, broad head and dorsal ground color of olive gray to brownish gray with numerous yellowish to orange dorsal spots and streaks and a pale underside. These skinks have a wide distribution over western and central Asia, and northern Africa. More specifically, this widely ranging species can occur from eastern Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey, to western Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. This species also ranges from portions of Russia, southern Armenia, Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, and into northwestern India.

These skinks earn their common name in honor and consideration of the German zoologist, Johann Gottlob Theaenus Schneider. As with many species of skinks, the Schneider's skink is also an adept burrower, and will seek refuge under rocks, logs, vegetation, and other debris. The Schneider's skink commonly appears in the pet trade, but is not frequently bred in captivity. Nonetheless, this species can make for a unique and personable species to maintain in the terrarium.

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: *Eumeces*

Species: *Eumeces schneideri**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, Schneider's skinks can attain longevity of 8 to 10 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

The Schneider's, or Berber's skink is a relatively medium sized to large, terrestrial species of skink indigenous to a wide distribution over western and central Asia, and northern Africa. More specifically, this widely ranging species can occur from eastern Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey, to western Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. This species also ranges from portions of Russia, southern Armenia, Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, and into northwestern India. Within this range, Schneider's or Berber's skinks occupy primarily terrestrial environments, including dry to semi-dry grasslands, rocky steppes, and scrublands, to semi-deserts, where they seek shelter in rock crevices, burrows, hollowed logs, and other ground debris.

Origin/History

Eumeces schneiderii (Daudin, 1802). Subspecies would have other authors and years first describing them.

Small numbers of Schneider's skinks were imported between 1970 and 2000 but for the most part they would not be widely captive-bred.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Schneider's skinks are fairly small to mid-sized skink species, ranging from about 10.0 to 18.0 inches as adults in snout-to-tail length, although they can reach slightly larger lengths on occasion. Maximum snout-to-vent length is up to about 6.6 inches snout-to-vent length (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Terrestrial to Semi-Fossorial. Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling to juvenile Schneider's skinks can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adults require a minimum of a 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Provide Schneider's skinks with substrates that enable burrowing such as aspen chip shavings, cypress mulch, or orchid bark. Provide a hide box and artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities. Provide a bowl or dish of fresh water to help provide and maintain adequate hydration and humidity. Schneider's skinks are primarily terrestrial, and do not require tall, or arboreal enclosures.

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 80 to 85 degrees F on the cool side and ambient temperatures, and 95 to 100 degrees F on the warm, basking side. 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 Schneider's 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. Schneider's skinks require low relative humidity, and should be maintained at, or within a range of about 20 to 30%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Primarily Insectivorous to Omnivorous; In the wild, Schneider's skinks are omnivorous, meaning they will eat both plant and animal matter. These large skinks will feed on a variety of insects, snails, slugs, and other gastropods, worms, other invertebrates, as well as the occasional small rodent, smaller reptiles, or other smaller animals they can capture and consume. In captivity, feed Schneider's skinks in captivity a mixed assortment of chopped up vegetables including carrots, peas, collard, mustard, and dandelion greens, and beans. Several commercially available omnivore mix diets are also available. They will also eat a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Schneider's 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. Their 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

Schneider's skinks can become very accustomed to regular human interaction, and can often even be hand fed. Many can also be handled for short periods of time, but are often a faster moving and flightier species when in hand. Care should therefore be taken to not accidentally drop these animals when handling them. Most Schneider's skinks that are available are still wild caught or imported, and should be given time to adjust and acclimate before being handled initially.

****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

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

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