

Tiliqua multifasciata

Josephine Worsfold, 2002

Authority: Sternfeld, 1919

Common Name: Centralian Blue-tongue

Description (Storr *et al.* 1981; Greer 1989; Homer 1992; Cogger 1994): *Tiliqua multifasciata* is a heavily built and reasonably large skink, with a snout-vent length of up to 300mm, and has small limbs and a tapering tail that measures up to 56% of its SVL. The head is broad and triangular and dorsal scales are smooth. The dorsal colour ranges from grey to light brown and is broken by at least 15 broad bands of pale orange to dark brown. The ventral surface may be white or cream to light grey-brown. While the lower and anterior surfaces of the limbs are also a light grey-brown, the dorsal and posterior surfaces tend to black. There is a conspicuous triangular stripe on the temporal region, also black. The mid-body scales are in 37 to 46 rows, the nasals are closely separated, and the ear apertures are conspicuous. The dorsal scales are moderate in size, and the head shields are complete and symmetrical. *Tiliqua multifasciata* has 4 to 6 supracilliaris, 8 to 10 upper labials, 2 or 3 supraoculars, and between the parietals and normal nuchal scales there are at least 3 rows of enlarged hexagonal scales.

Similar species (Storr *et al.* 1981; Homer 1992; Cogger 1980; Cogger 1994): *Tiliqua multifasciata* may be distinguished from *T. occipitalis* by the more numerous cross bands on its dorsal surface, from *T. scincoides* by the presence of the black temporal band, and from *T. rugosa* by its tapering, rather than blunted, tail. The genus most related to the *Tiliqua* is *Trachydosaurus*.

Range (Storr *et al.* 1981; Homer 1992; Cogger 1994): *Tiliqua multifasciata* has been found in the north and northeast of Western Australia, north South Australia, the Northern Territory, the northwest of New South Wales, and western Queensland.

Ecology and behaviour (Cogger 1980; Greer 1989; Homer 1992; Cogger 1994): Like other members of the genus *Tiliqua*, The Centralian Blue-Tongue is slow moving and solitary. In addition to being an opportunistic scavenger, it is omnivorous in its diet and will typically prey on invertebrates and ingest plant parts. *T. multifasciata* inhabits a range of arid and semi-arid habitats, although it may prefer rocky areas; like other blue-tongues, it is a diurnal ground dweller which shelters in crevasses and burrows. *T. multifasciata* is somewhat aggressive and, when threatened, will thrust out its blue tongue and adjust its posture so as to appear larger and more formidable. This defensive display is often accompanied by a belligerent hissing.

Breeding biology (Cogger 1980; Greer 1989; Cogger 1994; Bull *et al.* 1998; Bull 2000; Main 2000): There is some evidence that *T. multifasciata* males locate females using scent over long distances and that they will engage in a battle over a prospective mate. Blue-tongues are viviparous, and the Centralian Blue-Tongue may give birth to up to 10 young per brood. Although monogamous mating during the breeding season and mother-offspring recognition has been documented in a closely related species, the presence or absence of these phenomena has yet to be studied in *T. multifasciata*.

Literature cited:

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