

Lepidothyris fernandi



Scientific Classification

Kingdom:	Anamalia
Phylum:	Cordata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Scincidae
Genus:	Lepidothyris
Species:	<i>L. fernandi</i>

Binomial Name

Lepidothyris fernandi
([Burton](#), 1836)

Synonyms

- *Tiliqua fernandi* [Burton](#), 1836
- *Lygosoma fernandi* [Boulenger](#)
- *Lepidothyris fernandi* [Cope](#), 1892
- *Lygosoma fernandi* [Bocage](#), 1895
- *Riopa fernandi* [Loveridge](#), 1936
- *Mochlus fernandi* [Mittleman](#), 1952
- *Lepidothyris fernandi* [Wagner](#) et al., 2009

The **fire skink** (*Lepidothyris fernandi*), also known as the **true fire skink** or **Togo fire skink**, is a fairly large [skink](#), a [species](#) of lizard in the [family Scincidae](#). The [species](#) is known for its bright and vivid coloration. Native to tropical forests in [Western Africa](#), the fire skink lives fifteen to twenty years. This species is a [diurnal](#) lizard that loves to burrow and hide. It is relatively shy and reclusive, but may become tame in captivity.

Etymology

The [specific name](#), *fernandi*, refers to the island formerly known as Fernando Po,^[2] which has been called [Bioko](#) since 1979.

Taxonomy

Historically, the fire skink has been placed in several different [genera](#) and was until recently placed in [Riopa](#) together with several skinks from southeast Asia. While these are superficially similar to the African fire skink, they are closer to some other Asian skinks, resulting in their move to [Lygosoma](#). The fire skink is not closely related to other skinks and belongs to the genus *Lepidothyris*.^[3] However, a review of the [taxonomy](#) of the fire skink did reveal that it, as traditionally defined, actually consists of three separate species. This essentially limits true *L. fernandi* to tropical Western Africa, while population in Central and East Africa are [L. hinkeli](#) and [L. striatus](#).^[3]

Description

The fire skink is a fairly large species of skink, reaching up to 37 cm (15 in) in total length (including tail).^[1] The most notable aspect of the fire skink's appearance is its vivid, bright colors. Smooth, gold scales adorn the fire skink's back, while red and black bars set against a silver background line its sides. The fire skink does not display obvious sexual dimorphism, which makes it difficult to sex. Males are, in general, bulkier than females with a slightly flatter head and wider jaws.^[4]

Reproduction

The fire skink, unlike many other skink species, is [oviparous](#). An adult female will generally lay a [clutch](#) of five to nine eggs after mating. Fire skink eggs take forty to fifty days to hatch when incubated at a temperature of 85 °F (29 °C).

Diet

L. fernandi has a large appetite, and it is mainly insectivorous. Insects such as [crickets](#), and larvae such as mealworms, are used for feeding captive specimens.^[4]

In captivity

The fire skink is kept as a pet. Many specimens available for sale are wild-caught, but captive-bred skinks are available. The fire skink requires a larger tank with plenty of horizontal space, as well as some vertical space for its occasional tendency to climb.^[4] It also requires a loose substrate for burrowing. The environment should be moist and humid, with plenty of ground cover to create hiding places. One end of the tank should be warmed with a lamp for basking. Live insects are a proper diet, and some keepers provide an occasional [pinkie mouse](#).^[4]

Subspecies

Two [subspecies](#) are recognized as being valid, including the [nominotypical subspecies](#).^[1]

- *Lepidothyris fernandi fernandi* ([Burton](#), 1836)
- *Lepidothyris fernandi harlani* ([Hallowell](#), 1845)

Nota bene: A [trinomial authority](#) in parentheses indicates that the subspecies was originally described in a genus other than *Lepidothyris*.