

REPTILES

INTRODUCTION

D. Shelly, M.Sc

I have not attempted to re-write this chapter of the original book but rather update the information originally presented. Several of the following paragraphs have not been altered from the words initially put down by D.R. Butcher as changes are not needed – the comments from 1984 are still relevant today.

The information available in 2005 on reptile diversity in the Dubbo region is far greater than that which was available in 1984. Today, I can draw on several sources of information regarding the vertebrate species present in the Dubbo region. Databases such as the NSW Wildlife Atlas administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (formerly National Parks and Wildlife Service) contain literally tens of thousands of records of animal locations throughout the state. Such a database was not publicly available in 1984. In addition, there have been several extensive vertebrate fauna surveys conducted throughout the region, giving new information with regards to amphibian species presence.

Some of these surveys include those conducted within

- Goobang National Park (Harvey Ranges) by NPWS.
- Goonoo / Momo / Cobbora / Beni State Forests by State Forests (now National Parks and Wildlife or Department of Primary Industry (Forests NSW)) and by the NPWS Biodiversity surveys of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion.
- Gibraltar Rock and a compartment of Goonoo State Forest by the Department of Land and Water Conservation (now Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources). See also DFNCs notes on Gibraltar Rock.

Since 1984, there have also been many records made of vertebrate species by members of the Dubbo Field Naturalist Society from either sightings at home or on the many field trips members undertake. Therefore, with the information that is available, the list of reptile species known to exist in the Dubbo region can be considered comprehensive. These species are presented below.

REPTILIA

While most reptiles are originally five-toed, some members of this group have evolved to the point where limbs have become reduced and vestigial as in some lizards, or completely absent as in the snakes. Generally, all reptiles are terrestrial vertebrates which are ectothermic; that is they derive their body heat from external sources, usually the sun. Most reptiles have only limited dependence on water. The hard scaled skin does not require to be moist thus many species can live in dry environments.

The class reptilia evolved from a group of early amphibians and reached the peak of diversity during the Mesozoic period about 120 million years ago when it dominated all bioclines. The majority and especially the very large became extinct about 60 million years ago. Medium-sized animals such as the crocodile survived but only in tropical climates. Smaller species which warmed quickly could survive in far more hostile environments but the reptiles of today are only a shadow of their past glory.

Four orders of reptile are recognised, three of which occur in Australia:

- Crocodylia (crocodiles and their relatives)
- Testudines [previously Chelonia] (turtles and tortoises)
- Squamata (snakes and lizards)
- Rynchocephalia (monotypic ancient order which now only includes the Tuatara from New Zealand)

Two orders (Testudines and Squamata) are represented in the Dubbo area.

Family **AGAMIDAE** – 7 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

These are the ‘dragons’ of the reptile world. A large family of lizards with about 70 species found in Australia, of which 15 species are known in New South Wales. They are usually active, diurnal lizards, mainly terrestrial but with a few arboreal species. The family is characterised by their juxtaposed body scales, often with greatly enlarged tubercles and spines. The limbs are well-developed and the hindlimbs are long. The tongue is broad, flat and fleshy, slightly notched in front and not sheathed at its base. Autotomy (loss of tail and subsequent regeneration) does not occur.

Genus: Amphibolurus

Amphibolurus muricatus – Jacky Lashtail

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized dragon (up to 100mm snout-vent length) with a long tail and a crest of enlarged scales on the neck and back. Grey to grey-brown above with two series of lighter patches along the back, which may merge to form a pair of pale stripes either side of the midline. The tail is often banded. The mouth lining is yellow.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Most records are north of Dubbo, but this species would be expected in most timbered areas. The main distribution in NSW is to the east of the Dubbo region along the coast and dividing range.

Regional status: Uncommon

Amphibolurus nobbi coggeri – Nobbi Lashtail

Distinguishing features:

Similar to the Jacky Lashtail but generally slightly smaller in size (up to 75mm snout-vent length). The back may have a series of paired dark blotches instead of lines. The main differentiating feature is the mouth lining is pink.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in forested areas.

Regional status: Common

Genus: Lophognathus

Lophognathus burnsi – Burn's Dragon or Gilbert's Dragon

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized dragon (up to 100mm snout-vent length). Grey-brown to dark grey above with a broad cream or white dorsolateral band that extends to the base of the tail. Vertebral spines are present from the nape and continue to the base of the tail. The lower lips and chin are white and the inside of the mouth is flesh coloured.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known only from Beni State Forest in the centre of the region. This species distribution in NSW is north of Dubbo, typically on floodplain woodlands.

Regional status: Rare

Genus: Physignathus

Physignathus lesueurii – Eastern Water Dragon

Distinguishing features:

A large sized dragon (up to 200mm snout-vent length). The body is coloured grey to olive green with black traverse bars, while the undersurface is grey-brown. The throat and edges of the mouth are light blue-grey. The Water Dragon has a prominent nuchal and vertebral crest of spinose scales and dorsolateral skin folds.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted from the Macquarie River at Burrendong Dam near Wellington on the eastern margin of region and from near Narromine on the western margin. Could be expected to be present near rock piles and concrete weirs at intervals along the Macquarie River.

Regional status: Rare

This species has a habit of sitting on tree branches, rocks and logs overhanging water. If disturbed it will drop into the water where it can remain submerged for long periods.

Genus: Pogona

Pogona barbata – Eastern Bearded Dragon

Distinguishing features:

A large sized dragon (up to 250mm snout-vent length). The body colour is grey, sometimes yellowish above, usually with paired pale blotches down the back either side of the midline. The undersurface is grey with darker circles. The mouth is bright yellow. The dorso-ventral margin of the body has several rows of spines. In contrast to the Central Bearded Dragon, there are no enlarged spines in the centre of the throat and no conspicuous white bands on the back and tail.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most timbered habitats.

Regional status: Common

Pogona vitticeps – Central Bearded Dragon

Distinguishing features:

Slightly smaller than the Eastern Bearded Dragon (up to 200mm snout-vent length), but often similar in colouration and pattern. This species has enlarged spines across the centre of the throat. The dorso-ventral margin of the body is demarcated by an orderly row of enlarged conical spines.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Only noted from Gibraltar Rock to the south of Dubbo. The region represents the eastern limit of this species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Rare

Genus: Tympanocryptis

Tympanocryptis tetraporophora – Long-tailed Earless Dragon

Distinguishing features:

A small sized dragon (up to 50mm snout-vent length). The tympanum (earhole) is covered by scaly skin and is not distinct. The tail is at least twice as long as the head and body. Body colouration is pale grey to red-brown above with or without paler longitudinal lines and dark transverse bands. The neck is narrower than the head.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Recorded from Gilgandra on the northern margin of the region. The Dubbo region represents the eastern limit of this species distribution in central-western NSW (it is found further east in northern NSW).

Regional status: Rare

Family **BOIDAE** – 1 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

The python family contains the largest living snakes. All pythons are rather bulky, relatively slow moving snakes. They lay eggs which they incubate and protect by coiling around the eggs almost continually until they hatch. Pythons are non-venomous constrictors, coiling and suffocating prey. Kenosis (movement of bones) in the skull is very great, allowing the swallowing of prey with a diameter much greater than its own body.

Genus: Morelia

Morelia spilota – Carpet Python

Distinguishing features:

A large, bulky snake (average length 2m, maximum 4m). Colouration is pale to dark grey above, often with a reddish brown flush. There is a series of roughly paired, pale grey, round blotches, which may sometimes be joined, running down the back. The belly is cream to grey.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known from Gibraltar Rock south of Dubbo but is likely to occur throughout region in timbered areas, particularly those near permanent and ephemeral watersources. There is a tendency to place carpet pythons in farm sheds for rodent control so this species might be more abundant near property buildings than in natural habitat.

Regional status: Rare

There are three subspecies of Carpet Python in NSW but only one, the Inland Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota metcalfei*) occurs in the Dubbo region.

Family **CHELIDAE** – 1 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

The family is characterised by being pleurodirous (the head and neck are folded under the front edge of the carapace by one or more horizontal folds). The forelimbs and hindlimbs are jointed, not paddle-shaped with four or five clawed, webbed feet.

Genus: Chelodina

Chelodina longicollis – Eastern Snake-necked Turtle

Distinguishing features:

This species is the only long-necked turtle to be found in the Dubbo region. A medium sized turtle (up to a 25 cm shell length) that is dark brown to black above, and cream to white below with broad black sutures on the lower half of the shell. The skin on the neck has numerous rounded to pointed tubercles.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in association with watercourses (both permanent and ephemeral) as well as dams.

Regional status: Common

The turtle can often be seen walking overland at distances from water after periods of heavy rain.

Family **ELAPIDAE** – 7 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

There are 90 species of elapids throughout Australia, with 37 present in New South Wales. These snakes have 15-23 scales around the middle of the body, and has enlarged hollow teeth (fangs) at the front of the upper jaw which are venomous. Elapids have no loreal scales (ie. scales separating the top from the side of the snout).

Genus: Demansia

Demansia psammophis – Yellow-faced Whipsnake

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized snake (up to 80cm total length) with a relatively slender body shape. Can be variable in colour but usually grey to olive brown above. The underside is grey-green to a dull yellow. A distinctive dark 'comma' with a creamy yellow margin occurs around the eye (which makes the eye look large at first glance), and there is a pale-edged dark band across the snout.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region, particularly in wooded areas.

Regional status: Uncommon

Venomous – capable of causing marked local symptoms.

Yellow-faced Whipsnake (*Demansia psammophis*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: Furina

Furina diadema – Red-naped Snake

Distinguishing features:

A small, slender snake (up to 40cm total length). Red-brown above, each scale edged with dark brown or black, giving a network appearance. The head and nape are shiny black, enclosing a bright red or orange patch (see photo). The underside is white or cream.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly recorded throughout the centre of the region (eg. Dubbo, Goonoo State Forest, Sappa Bulga Range).

Regional status: Uncommon

Venomous – but regarded as virtually harmless.

Red-naped Snake (*Furina diadema*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: Pseudechis

Pseudechis guttatus – Spotted Black Snake

Distinguishing features:

A large, relatively solid snake (up to 1.8m total length). Black above, grey to blue-grey below.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly noted from the area west of a line between Dubbo and Gilgandra (ie. western half Dubbo region). Usually in association with either permanent or ephemeral watersources.

Regional status: Uncommon

Venomous – sometimes capable of inflicting a fatal bite.

Pseudechis porphyriacus – Red-bellied Black Snake

Distinguishing features:

A large, relatively solid snake (up to 1.7m total length). Shiny black to purple-black above. The sides are bright red, becoming more yellowish centrally underneath. Large, old snakes sometimes have a 'grey' look to them rather than black.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region, usually associated with permanent or ephemeral watercourses. Equally at home in urban backyards and rural areas.

Regional status: Common

Venomous – sometimes capable of inflicting a fatal bite.

Genus: Pseudonaja

Pseudonaja textilis – Eastern Brown Snake

Distinguishing features:

Mature animals are a large, relatively solid snake (up to 2.3m total length). Both adults and juveniles can be variable in colour. Often ranging from light grey-brown through to very dark brown; cream or yellow below with orange or grey blotches. The young often have a broad black band across the head and another on the nape. There may be numerous narrow bands on the body.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout region. Occupies urban areas as well as rural. Inhabits almost all habitats as can live in cracks in the ground in the more open areas as well as under shelter.

Regional status: Common

Venomous – always capable of inflicting a fatal bite.

Genus: Suta

Suta spectabilis dwyeri – Variable Black-naped Snake

Distinguishing features:

A small snake (up to 50cm total length). Yellow-brown to orange-brown above with the scales dark-edged. The head and nape are black with a small patch in front of the eye and on the top of the snout. The lips are white. Underside is pearly white.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered areas. Can also be located occasionally in wood piles and under scattered logs in more open areas.

Regional status: Uncommon

Venomous – but regarded as virtually harmless.

Genus: Vermicella

Vermicella annulata – Eastern Bandy-bandy

Distinguishing features:

A smallish, relatively slender snake (maximum length up to 85cm). Has a unique colour pattern of the entire head, body and tail being banded with distinct alternate black and white rings.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly known from the eastern half of the region between Dubbo and Wellington. A nocturnal and burrowing snake mostly found under rocks and logs or unearthed when holes are dug.

Regional status: Uncommon / Rare

Venomous – but regarded as virtually harmless.

Family **GEKKONIDAE** – 8 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

A large family with about 111 species in Australia, 29 of which are present in NSW. All geckoes are typically small (less than 150mm long) and have four well-developed limbs, each with five digits. Many species have expanded toe pads for climbing. They have large unblinking eyes with vertical slit-like pupils. The belly skin may be semi-transparent with some internal organs visible. All geckoes have tails that are easily cast off and can regenerate. All species are nocturnal.

Genus: Diplodactylus

Diplodactylus vittatus – Eastern Stone Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A small gecko (up to 55mm snout-vent length). Brown or grey above with a light-coloured zig-zag vertebral stripe that merges with the light-coloured head (see photo). The undersurface is light grey. The Stone Gecko has a short, thick tail.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most timbered habitats. Contrary to its common name, the Stone Gecko can be found in habitats with and without boulders, rocks and stones.

Regional status: Uncommon / Common

Eastern Stone Gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: Gehyra

Gehyra dubia – Dubious Dtella or Northern Dtella

Distinguishing features:

A middle sized, arboreal (tree living) gecko (up to 71mm snout-vent length). Light grey to brown above with a series of white spots that have a dark line on the anterior margin (ie. so it looks like little staple scars). The underside is whitish to dull yellow. The colour pattern becomes very indistinct at night, making them look a uniform light grey.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the centre of the region (eg. Dubbo zoo, near Gilgandra, Brocklehurst). Present in buildings as well as timbered habitats.

Regional status: Uncommon

Gehyra variegata – Varied Dtella

Distinguishing features:

The colour is variable and can be similar to the Dubious Dtella, however this species is generally smaller (up to 57mm snout-vent length). The back is usually grey to brown with a chequered pattern of dark and pale blotches and several dark lines on the side of the head. The undersurface is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most wooded habitats. Present in urban areas as well as rural, often seen hunting insects on flyscreens, windows and walls on summer nights. Arboreal (tree living) in habit.

Regional status: Common

Genus: Heteronotia

Heteronotia binoei – Prickly Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A small gecko (up to 50mm snout-vent length). The Prickly gecko gets its name from the prickly scales that cover its head, back and tail. These scales identify the species from most other geckoes in NSW. Highly variable in colouring but basically a brown background with black markings that usually form a pattern of transverse bands or a network above. The undersurface is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

A terrestrial (ground living) gecko mostly noted from timbered areas in the northern half of the Dubbo region (eg. Goonoo, Gilgandra and Beni State Forests). In NSW, the distribution is mostly north and west of the Dubbo region.

Regional status: Common

Genus: Oedura

Oedura monolis – Ocellated Velvet Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A large, arboreal gecko (up to 92mm snout-vent length). A beautifully marked gecko that has pale yellowish brown above with numerous dark brown scales that give a mottled effect. There is a series of pale-centred, dark-edged spots, usually paired, along the vertebral area. The underside is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered habitats. The Dubbo region is close to the southern limit of this species' distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Uncommon

Oedura robusta – Robust Velvet Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A relatively large, arboreal gecko (up to 84mm snout-vent length). Grey to grey-blue above with a dark brown to black lateral stripe running from the eye to the tail. The stripes are joined by transverse bars creating a series of large, pale, mid-dorsal blotches. The top of the head is pale grey and the undersurface is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found mostly in the northern half of the region (ie. north of Dubbo) in wooded areas and rocky outcrops.

Regional status: Uncommon

Genus: Strophurus

Strophurus intermedius – Southern Spiny-tailed Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized gecko (up to 67mm snout-vent length). Grey to grey-brown above with black scales that form a fine pattern of flecks (see photo). The inside of the mouth is dark blue. There are two rows of conical tubercles down the back that continue onto the long tail.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted mainly from the southern margin of the region at the northern tip of Goobang National Park. Can be found in shrubs and trees as well as on the ground at night. The Dubbo region is close to the eastern limit of this species' distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Rare



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: Underwoodisaurus

Underwoodisaurus milii – Thick-tailed Gecko

Distinguishing features:

A large, plump terrestrial gecko (up to 105mm snout-vent length) with a big head and a big, carrot shaped tail. Very dark purple-black above with white or yellow spots in irregular rows across the back. These spots form distinctive bands. The undersurface is white to light grey. This species has relatively large eyes.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered and rocky habitats. In other areas it is known to prefer patches of thick leaf litter near tree bases.

Regional status: Uncommon

Family **PYGOPODIDAE** – 4 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

There are 37 species of ‘flap-footed’ lizard in Australia and New Guinea, with 11 found in NSW. All pygopods are snake-like, have no trace of any forelimbs but have hindlimbs consisting of a scaly flap that is usually held against the body.

Genus: Delma

Delma inornata – Patternless Delma

Distinguishing features:

A small sized snake-lizard (up to 135mm snout-vent length). Grey to olive-brown above, with the scales having black margins. There are no dark bands present. The underside is flesh coloured and the throat is yellow. The scales around the edge of the eye are white.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known from the north-west corner of the Dubbo region between Collie and Gilgandra. Can be found in most habitats, usually sheltering under logs. The Dubbo region is at the eastern limit of this species distribution in central-west NSW.

Regional status: Rare

Genus: Lialis

Lialis burtonis – Burton’s Snake-lizard

Distinguishing features:

A large snake-lizard (up to 291mm snout-vent length). The colour and patterning can vary considerably with the basic colour range from cream to deep brown above, with or without patterning or stripes. The undersurface can be the same

as above. The most distinguishable feature of this species is the very angular head with a conspicuously wedge-shaped snout when viewed from above.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted around Dubbo and in Gilgandra State Forest in the centre of the region, but could be expected in most timbered areas. Can be found by night and by day.

Regional status: Uncommon

Genus: Pygopus

Pygopus lepidopus – Southern Scaly-foot or Common Scaly-foot

Distinguishing features:

A large sized snake-lizard (up to 275mm snout-vent length). The body is either a uniform grey, olive or red-brown, sometimes with a grey head and tail. Sometimes there is a pattern of dark stripes and/or flecks. Normally there are some dark bars on the lips and slanted dark bars on the neck.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted from Goonoo State Forest in the centre of the region. Could be expected in most timbered areas east of Dubbo as this species main distribution is along the coast and northern NSW slopes and plains.

Regional status: Rare

Pygopus nigriceps – Western Scaly-foot or Hooded Scaly-foot

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized snake-lizard (up to 224mm snout-vent length). Grey to red-brown above with darker reticulations. One or two dark bars across the head and neck which can merge or become fainter in older animals.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Can be found throughout the region but is most abundant on areas of sandy soils in conjunction with cypress pine. The majority of this species distribution in NSW is west of the Dubbo region.

Regional status: Uncommon

Family **SCINCIDAE** – 19 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

There are more than 283 species of skink in Australia, of which 78 species are present in NSW. Skinks are mostly diurnal, have overlapping scales that are smooth and shiny and have the ability to break off the tail and regrow the lost portion. All skinks have a broad, fleshy tongue and usually have an ear-opening. In most cases skinks have four well developed limbs with five digits.

Genus: Bassiana

Bassiana platynota – Red-throated Cool-skink

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized terrestrial skink (up to 80mm snout-vent length). The body is a light grey to brown above, the outer edges of each scale sometimes dark-edged and producing a network pattern. There is a broad black stripe running from the nose down to the base of the tail. The undersurface is white to grey and the throat is usually red.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Only recorded from near Dubbo zoo in the centre of the region. Can be expected to be found in woodland areas and grasslands with lots of litter and ground debris. Also known to shelter under rocks. The Dubbo region is the western limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Rare

Genus: Carlia

Carlia tetradactyla – Southern Rainbow Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small terrestrial skink (up to 64mm snout-vent length). The back is a deep brown colour with a slightly paler dorsolateral stripe. On the back between the pale stripes are three or four rows of white spots and/or dashes. On the sides of breeding males there are two broad orange stripes with a cream to blue-green space between. The belly is grey to blue-green.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found mainly throughout the centre of the region around Dubbo and north to Cobbora State Forest. Is equally at home in urban gardens and rural forests and woodlands.

Regional status: Uncommon / Common

Genus: Cryptoblepharus

Cryptoblepharus carnabyi – Carnaby's Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small arboreal skink (up to 40mm snout-vent length). The body is grey-brown above with scattered light and dark flecks and spots (so it looks like a chequerboard pattern – see photo). The underside is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most habitats with timber or logs. Can also be found in urban gardens and in and around buildings, often on the walls.

Regional status: Abundant

Carnaby's Skink (*Cryptoblepharus carnabyi*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: Ctenotus

Ctenotus allotropis – Brown-blazed Wedgesnout Ctenotus

Distinguishing features:

A small sized skink (up to 54mm snout-vent length). Golden brown along the spine with a narrow white dorsolateral stripe bordered by a black stripe that contains a row of pale spots (see photo). The sides are coloured black with white spots with a white stripe underneath. The undersurface is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly found across the centre of the region in cypress dominated habitats (eg. the sandy soils of Goonoo, Cobbora and Beni State Forests). The Dubbo region is at the eastern limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Uncommon

Brown-blazed Wedgesnout Ctenotus (*Ctenotus allotropis*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Ctenotus robustus – Robust Ctenotus or Striped Skink

Distinguishing features:

A large, solid skink (up to 105mm snout-vent length). Fawn to brown above with a broad, black vertebral stripe. The sides are brown with a series of pale spots. The undersurface is white.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered areas and rocky habitats. Also found in urban gardens with lots of litter and refuges.

Regional status: Common

Ctenotus taeniolatus – Copper-tailed Ctenotus

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized skink (up to 77mm snout-vent length). Brown above with black vertebral stripe, and a narrow pale dorsolateral stripe, dark edged above. The tail often has an orange or red flush. The sides are black with bold white stripes along the centre and underneath.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Most records from the centre of the region (eg. Goobang National Park, outskirts of Dubbo, Cobbora State Forest). The skink favours timbered areas. The Dubbo region is at the eastern limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Common

Genus: Egernia

Egernia cunninghami – Cunningham's Spiny-tailed Skink

Distinguishing features:

A large, stout shaped skink (up to 255mm snout-vent length). The species varies in colour and pattern across its range. In the Dubbo region the colouration is brown above with or without scattered lighter and darker markings. The undersurface has a dull orange flush to the abdomen with scattered dark markings. The scales on the back, side and tail are spiny, with those on the tail more pronounced.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known only from Mt. Arthur reserve near Wellington on the eastern side of the region. Mainly found in rocky areas. The Dubbo region is at the western limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Rare

Egernia striolata – Tree Skink

Distinguishing features:

A large, stout skink (up to 119mm snout-vent length). Dark brown to grey above with scattered pale flecks (see photo). There is a broad, lighter coloured dorsolateral area from the neck to midbody. The side of the body has a dark zone from the eye to the hindlimb. The scales around the mouth are white. The undersurface usually has a yellow or dull orange flush.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly recorded from the western half of the region, west of Dubbo. Found in most timbered habitats as the skink shelters in tree hollows, under bark, in cracks in tree trunks and in hollow logs on the ground.

Regional status: Common

Tree Skink (*Egernia striolata*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Egernia whitii – White's Rock-Skink

Distinguishing features:

A medium-large sized skink (up to 113mm snout-vent length). Grey-brown above, often with a red-brown flush along the spine. The sides are usually mottled with prominent black-edged pale spots. The head has a pale streak running from above the mouth to the ear, passing under the eye.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Patchy distribution throughout the region in timbered areas associated with rocky outcrops (eg. Goobang National Park, Gibraltar Rock south of Dubbo, Mt. Arthur reserve at Wellington). The Dubbo region is at the western limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Uncommon

Genus: *Eulamprus*

Eulamprus quoyii – Eastern Water-skink

Distinguishing features:

A medium-large sized skink (up to 115mm snout-vent length). The back is a golden olive brown above, flecked with black. The upper lateral area is black with a series of cream or yellow spots or variegations. The undersurface is white to pale yellow often with fine grey or black flecks.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted from Dubbo zoo in the centre of the region. This species has a close association with watersources. Very few records of the water-skink in NSW occur west of the Dubbo region as it is mostly found on the coast, dividing range and tablelands.

Regional status: Rare

Eulamprus tenuis – Barred-sided Forest Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small to medium sized skink (up to 86mm snout-vent length). Grey to brown-grey above with scattered dark blotches forming a variegated pattern. The dark brown-grey colouring of the upper lateral area is broken into large blotches. The undersurface is cream to yellow. The lips are pale with dark bars.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted from Dapper Nature Reserve on the eastern margin of the region. The Dubbo region is at the western limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Rare

Genus: *Lerista*

Lerista bouganvillii – South-eastern Slider

Distinguishing features:

A small snake-like burrowing skink (up to 55mm snout-vent length). The small forelimbs and hindlimbs each have five digits. The skink is a pale silver-grey to grey-brown above. A broad black stripe runs from the nostril, through the eye, over the forelimb to the base of the tail. The tail is orange-brown with scattered dark markings.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly found in woodlands on sandy soils throughout the centre of the region (eg. Goonoo, Cobbora and Beni State Forests).

Regional status: Uncommon

Lerista muelleri – Wood Mulch-Slider

Distinguishing features:

A small snake-like burrowing skink (up to 50mm snout-vent length). Small forelimbs and hindlimbs each have three digits. The colouring is grey or olive brown above, with or without four rows of dark spots. The side of the body has a black-brown upper lateral stripe. The underside is whitish.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered areas with abundant litter. The Dubbo region is near the eastern limit of this species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Common

Lerista punctatovittata – Eastern Robust Slider

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized burrowing skink (up to 105mm snout-vent length). The skink is snake-like in appearance where the limbs are small. The forelimb has one or two digits, the hindlimbs two digits. The back and sides are fawn to brown above and on the sides. Each scale has a dark hind-edge, forming a series of spots down the body and tail (see photo). The underside is white or pale yellow.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted only from the Sappa Bulga Range south of Dubbo (eg. in and around Momo State Forest). Occurs in timbered areas with ample litter. The Dubbo region is the eastern limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Uncommon / Rare

Eastern Robust Slider (*Lerista punctatovittata*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Genus: *Lygisaurus*

Lygisaurus foliorum – Tree-base Litter Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small sized skink (up to 35mm snout-vent length). Light to dark brown above, flecked with black and pale brown. The sides and limbs are covered with numerous small white spots. Seen at a distance the spots and flecks are not noticeable, giving the skink the appearance of being all brown above. The underside is whitish and the lips are barred. There are four digits on the forelimb and five on the hindlimb.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known from the central-north portion of the region, from Goonoo State Forest to just north of Gilgandra. The skink favours forested areas with ample ground litter. The Dubbo region is the western limit of the species distribution in NSW.

Regional status: Uncommon

Genus: Menetia

Menetia greyii – Common Dwarf Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small skink (up to 40mm snout-vent length). Grey to grey-brown above often with darker flecks. A brown-black stripe runs from the nostril along the sides to the tail and is bordered below by a white stripe that extends to the forelimb. The throat to the forelimb area of breeding males is orange, the remaining underside is yellow.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Most records are in the north-west corner of the region from Goonoo State Forest to near Narromine. Occurs in most habitats with consistent leaf litter and groundcover.

Regional status: Uncommon

Genus: Morethia

Morethia boulengeri – Boulenger's Skink

Distinguishing features:

A small skink (up to 57mm snout-vent length). Grey to brown above, often with scattered darker flecks. The uppermost side of the body is blackish with a white mid-lateral stripe dark-edged below. The undersurface is white, with a red-orange chin and throat in breeding males.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most habitats. Also occurs in urban areas around buildings and in gardens.

Regional status: Abundant

Genus: Tiliqua

Tiliqua scincoides – Common Bluetongue Lizard

Distinguishing features:

A large, stocky lizard (up to 351mm snout-vent length). Slivery grey to yellow-brown above with a series of dark brown to black transverse bands on the body and tail. The head is pale brown to grey with a wide black streak from the eye to above the ear.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered habitats. Occurs in urban gardens as well as rural lands.

Regional status: Common

Tiliqua rugosus – Shingleback Lizard

Distinguishing features:

A large, stocky lizard (up to 341mm snout-vent length). The back and sides vary in colour from black to red-brown, often with white or yellow blotches. The Shingleback has a large triangular head, blue tongue and a short, bulbous tail. The dorsal scales are large and corrugated, as are those on the flanks.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in timbered areas. Can be found sheltering in hollow logs, ground debris and in the burrows of other animals.

Regional status: Common

Family **TYPHLOPIDAE** – 4 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

These are the blind or worm snakes. These species are burrowers and spend most of their time underground. They look more like worms than either snakes or lizards. Blind snakes are characterised by having worm-like shiny bodies, eyes that are reduced to dark spots on the head, uniform scales on the body and a small mouth underneath an overhanging snout. The main differentiation into species is done by the number of body scales at mid-body and the shape of the snout.

Genus: Ramphotyphlops

Ramphotyphlops australis – Southern Blind Snake

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized blind snake (up to 46 cm total length). Can be brown, grey-brown to purplish brown above and white underneath. The junction between the dark upper and pale lower surfaces is prominent and jagged. The snout is rounded from above.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Recorded near Wellington on the eastern side of the region. The Dubbo region is the eastern limit of the species distribution in NSW. Being a burrowing species it is unlikely to be found in areas regularly cultivated.

Regional status: Rare

Ramphotyphlops bituberculatus – Prong-snouted Blind Snake

Distinguishing features:

A medium sized blind snake (up to 44cm total length). It is pink to reddish brown above, fading to creamy white below. The snout is distinctly trilobed from above and slightly angular in profile.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region. Being a burrowing species it is unlikely to be found in areas regularly cultivated.

Regional status: Uncommon

Ramphotyphlops proximus – Proximus Blind Snake

Distinguishing features:

A large blind snake (up to 64cm total length). Dark brown or grey-brown above, creamy white below. The snout is bluntly trilobed from above and angular in profile.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Noted from south of Wellington towards Burrendong Dam on the eastern margin of the region. Being a burrowing species it is unlikely to be found in areas regularly cultivated.

Regional status: Rare

Ramphotyphlops wiedii – Brown-snouted Blind Snake

Distinguishing features:

A small, slender blind snake (up to 30cm total length). Pinkish brown or red above, creamy white below. The snout is rounded from above.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Known mainly from the centre of the region around Dubbo. Being a burrowing species it is unlikely to be found in areas regularly cultivated.

Regional status: Rare

Family **VARANIDAE** – 2 species known in the Dubbo region.

General description:

There are 26 species of goanna, or monitor lizard in Australia, of which 4 occur in NSW. Goannas have a long, deeply forked tongue, powerful limbs with five digits and sharp claws, a long and slender tail and a dull rough skin. They have a long, flat head and a long neck.

Genus: Varanus

Varanus gouldii – Sand Monitor

Distinguishing features:

A large terrestrial monitor (up to 1.6m total length), usually of slender build. Light yellow-brown to red-brown above with scattered lighter and darker spots that tend to form transverse bands (see photo). A pale-edged black stripe runs from the eye across the ear and onto the neck. Most of the tail is dark with narrow, light-coloured rings – the last third is yellow. The undersurface is yellow with a few dark flecks.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Mostly known across the centre of the region on either side of Dubbo. Has a preference for timbered areas on sandy soils.

Regional status: Uncommon

Sand Monitor (*Varanus gouldii*)



Photo: Darren Shelly

Varanus varius – Lace Monitor

Distinguishing features:

A large monitor (up to 2.25m total length) usually of stout build. The species has two main colour patterns. Can be a dark blue-black above with scattered white-yellow scales or a broadly banded black and yellow on the body and tail.

Legal status: protected

Regional distribution:

Found throughout the region in most timbered habitats. Forages both on the ground and in trees during daylight.

Regional status: Common

The Lace Monitor has an interesting habit in that when disturbed the monitor climbs the nearest tree and keeps itself to the opposite side of the trunk to the disturber.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

anterior: situated at or near the front (head) end of the body.

arboreal: dwelling, at least part of the time, in trees.

dorsal: pertaining to the top.

dorsolateral: situated more or less midway between the dorsal and lateral surfaces of the body.

juxtaposed: scales which are not overlapping but lying side by side.

kinesis: movement occurring between the various bones of the skull. Such movement is great in snakes, moderate in lizards.

lateral: pertaining to the sides.

legal status ratings: protected, vulnerable, endangered (as listed in the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*).

nuchal crest: a medium longitudinal skinfold or row of enlarged scales on the nape.

regional status categories: rare (only one or two records known in Dubbo region)

 uncommon (relatively few records in Dubbo region)

 common (numerous records in Dubbo region)

 abundant (records from most habitats and in every year in Dubbo region)

reticulated: forming a network

tubercle: any small, rounded protuberance on the skin.

tympanum: eardrum.

ventral: pertaining to the lower surface of the animal.

vertebral: pertaining to the spine or vertebral column.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cogger, H. G. (1996) *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*. Reed Books Australia, Melbourne.

Robinson, M. (1998) *A Field Guide to Frogs of Australia: from Port Augusta to Fraser Island including Tasmania*. Australian Museum / Reed New Holland, Sydney.

Swan, G., Shea, G. and Sadler, R., (2004) *A Field Guide to Reptiles of New South Wales*. Second Edition. Reed New Holland, Sydney.