

LIZARDS IN OUR AREA – DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

... Peter Crowcroft

... Drawings Kaye Traynor

Australia is a land of reptiles. In Anglesea, we host at least twelve different species of lizard, including two from the skinks family *Scincidae*, and one from the dragons *Agamidae*. These three species are described in the following.

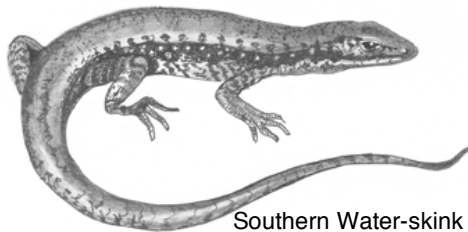
Blotched Blue-tongue *Tiliqua nigrolutea*

Blotched Blue-tongue Lizards are conspicuous and common visitors to our gardens, and are much loved by children and adults alike. They are generally placid, but will warn you, with a loud hiss and an impressive display of their blue tongue and open mouth, should they feel otherwise. Being reliant on the sun for warmth, Blue-tongues have recently begun hibernating under dense, leaf litter, or inside hollow logs. They will begin to emerge in mid-to-late spring, when they will seek the warmth of the sun and rocks. Unfortunately, the warmest rocks around are the bitumen roads, so please take care at that time of year! This species is viviparous (giving birth to live young), and females display a multiennial breeding cycle, often skipping one or more seasons after giving birth to 2–15 young. The Blotched Blue-tongue is distinguished from the Eastern Blue-tongue *T. scincoides* by having blotches on its skin, instead of stripes.



Blotched Blue-tongue Lizard

Southern Water-skink *Eulamprus tympanum*



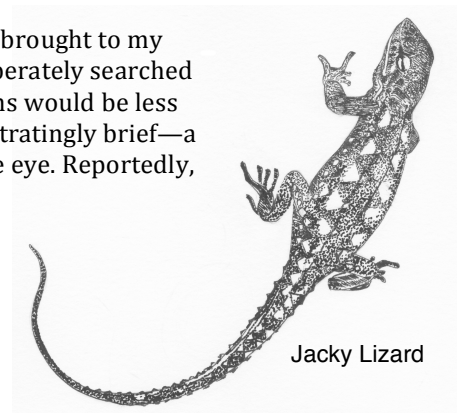
Southern Water-skink

Less commonly seen than the larger Blue-tongue Lizards, these exquisite reptiles are easily distinguished from members of other, small skink species. They are olive brown above, and have a black line extending along the sides of the body from the prominent tympanum (ear opening) to the hind limbs. The black line then merges to a lighter underside, creating a distinctive, triple line colouration. White, black and brown flecks cover the sides, and contrast with the background scales. True to their name, Southern Water-skinks are commonly found alongside creeks, and have been

recorded as taking to the water when disturbed; however, they also occur in a wide variety of habitats, excepting arid areas. A snout-vent (near the base of the tail) length of 85 mm, and a long tail make this a medium sized skink in your backyard.

Jacky Lizard or Tree-dragon *Amphibolurus muricatus*

Did you know there is a Dragon in our midst? This species was brought to my attention only recently, and since then, during summer, I have deliberately searched for it. Despite this, the total duration of my sightings of Tree-dragons would be less than one second. Obviously, these sightings have been, always, frustratingly brief—a dash across the walking path ahead, or the flash in the corner of the eye. Reportedly, Tree-dragons inhabit the Anglesea heathland, and have been seen also in and around Coogoorah Park. The Tree-dragon is a popular pet species. However, to see a 30 cm, fully-grown adult in the wild would be a special experience. Compared to the skinks, dragons have larger, more powerfully developed limbs, and use them to move rapidly when disturbed. They are oviparous, laying 3–9 eggs each summer in a small burrow, with the sex of the young thought to be determined by burrow



Jacky Lizard

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