

Junior Explorer Activity



Activity Sheet 3.

Wildlife Diary - LIZARDS

opportunity » growth » lifestyle



There are plenty of cool natural places to find lizards in Frankston. Some of them are featured in our booklet “Natural Reserves within Frankston City” which you can find on Council’s website. Find a Bush Reserve near your place and check out a lizard’s landscape.

HEADING OUT

Before you start out, here are some tips for keeping you and your park safe:

Know before you go!

Dress for the weather. Take a rain jacket or hat and wear sturdy covered shoes.

Let someone know where you are and stay with an adult.

Keep Our Parks Wild

Respect animal homes by leaving rocks, logs and vegetation as you find them and stay on the tracks. Remember nature’s treasures belong in the bush, not in your pockets.

Leave No Trace

The best souvenirs are your memories and photographs or drawings. Leave only footprints and always take your rubbish home.



LIZARDS ARE:

Scaly: Lizards have tough scaly skin so they don’t dry out.

Cold Blooded: Lizards adjust their body temperature to the air around them (ectothermic). In cold weather they cool down and become less active

Quiet: Lizards make very little noise, except for rustling among leaves and grass as they move around.

Shy: Hiding under logs, rocks and thick bushes is where lizards prefer to keep safe.

Quick: Fleeting glimpses are often all you see of lizards as they scurry for cover when disturbed.

Sun lovers: Rocks that heat up in the sun are favourite places for lizards, or sunny patches on walking tracks.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LIZARD

Today; AM

This morning I was slow to get going.

I had to warm my body against my favourite rock as the sun rose.

I was getting quite hungry, watching all that yummy food walk past before I was warm enough to chase and catch them.

Finally, the sun got high enough for me to start hunting.

Oh! Those flies tasted good, and the grasshoppers are to die for!

I managed to find a great spot under a tussock grass to wait for insects and spiders to come along, but found another lizard had beaten me to it.

I had to make a hasty retreat to a log on the ground with lots of borer holes to hide in. Phew, that was close.

Lots of nice little slaters there to keep me going till afternoon.



Today; PM

It became cloudy this afternoon, so I spent some time napping out of harm's way.

During a sunny patch, I ventured out to try my luck down by the frog pond.

I climbed onto a rock and to my surprise it started moving.

Jumping off, I looked around to see the biggest Blue-tongue lizard I have ever seen.

She scared me so much I nearly dropped my tail.

I ducked behind a mint bush so she couldn't smell me with her flicking blue tongue and waited for her to go back to sleep.

As I crept away, I noticed about 10 new born blue-tongues moving around in the bush nearby, searching for food.

It was time to go back to my log where I knew I would be safe.

LIZARDY LOGS

Logs on the ground make great homes for us lizards.

We like them because they usually have a full pantry with lots of different types of insects to choose from. Yum! Yum!

Equipment: Disposable gloves; artists paint brush; bug catcher (clear jar), magnifying glass

Instructions:

- Wear your gloves just in case you find a spider
- Gently roll over a rotting log or rock
- Quickly observe any insects before they run and hide
- Using the paint brush, gently pick up an insect and place in the jar
- Take a close look with the magnifying glass

Tips:



You may be able to scoop up a small lizard with your jar for a closer look and then handle it very gently in your half-closed fist (it will enjoy the warmth of your hand)

Return all wildlife to their homes and replace all logs and rocks to where you found them.



LIZARD LEGS

A lizard's legs are on the side of its body. When it is time to run, it has to pick itself up off the ground. Some dragon lizards can run on their 2 back legs,

- Geckos have toe pads like suction cups for climbing
- Legless lizards are long and wormlike, with no front legs and a small flap where the back legs would normally be
- Dragons have powerful back legs with long toes and strong claws for climbing trees – back legs longer than front legs



- Skinks are ground dwellers with short legs and slender toes. They can also drop their tails when they feel threatened to distract predators



Equipment: Sand box; small log and rock

Instructions:

- Set up a small sand box with a log and a rock in it
- Smooth out the sand and put it in a sunny spot
- Look around your garden for lizards
- Gently pick one up and count the fingers and toes
- Can you tell what type of lizard it is by looking at its legs and feet?
- Put your lizard in the box and allow it to move around on the sand
- Check out its footprints, and see what sort of track it makes.

Tip: Handle small lizards with care, they are very delicate

SUNBEDS

During the day we like to hang out on rocks that warm in the sun. You could say we are “solar powered”, but we don’t get sunburnt like you do.



When we get warm enough, we can go searching for food. That’s what I call “SUN SMART”



Try this: At home in your garden

- Pick a part of your garden that gets plenty of sun
- Place some dead logs in garden beds near tussock grasses for lizard habitat. (hiding places)
- Lie a small sheet of corrugated iron on the ground as a shelter that heats up in the sun
- Place flat rocks to catch the morning sun (lizards will lie on them to warm their bodies)
- A couple of clay pipes among grasses make great lizard hideouts (they get warm in the sun)
- On very hot days lizards will drink from a shallow water dish sitting on the ground (not too deep)
- Lie a piece of wood in the water and resting on the edge of the dish for climbing out
- Some lizards like to climb up into bushes, so make sure you have some of these nearby
- Lizards will soon find these new “lizard lounges”

Tips:

- All native lizards are protected and should be left in the bush where they live.
- After handling a lizard, always return it to its home
- Keeping pet reptiles requires a permit and must be acquired from a licensed breeder
- **Snail bait** is a health hazard for lizards. It will kill them. If you have blue-tongue lizards in your garden, snails won’t be a problem: They love eating them.



SCALY SKIN

Like all reptiles, we have to shed our scaly skin as we grow larger. I have to rub against a hard surface to remove patches of old scales, ready to grow brand new shiny ones.

My snake cousins replace their whole skin at once, peeling it off like taking a sock of your foot.

Underneath my scales is a watertight skin to stop me drying out.



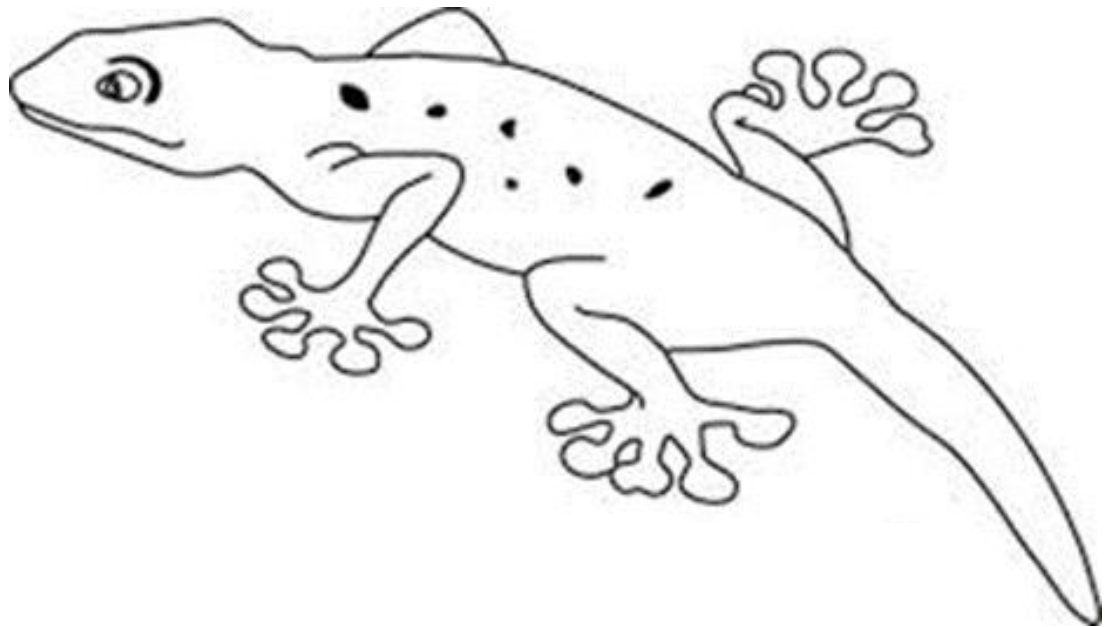
My scales are a bit like your fingernails and protect my skin from bumps and scratches as I drag along the ground and climb around in bushes.

LINKS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

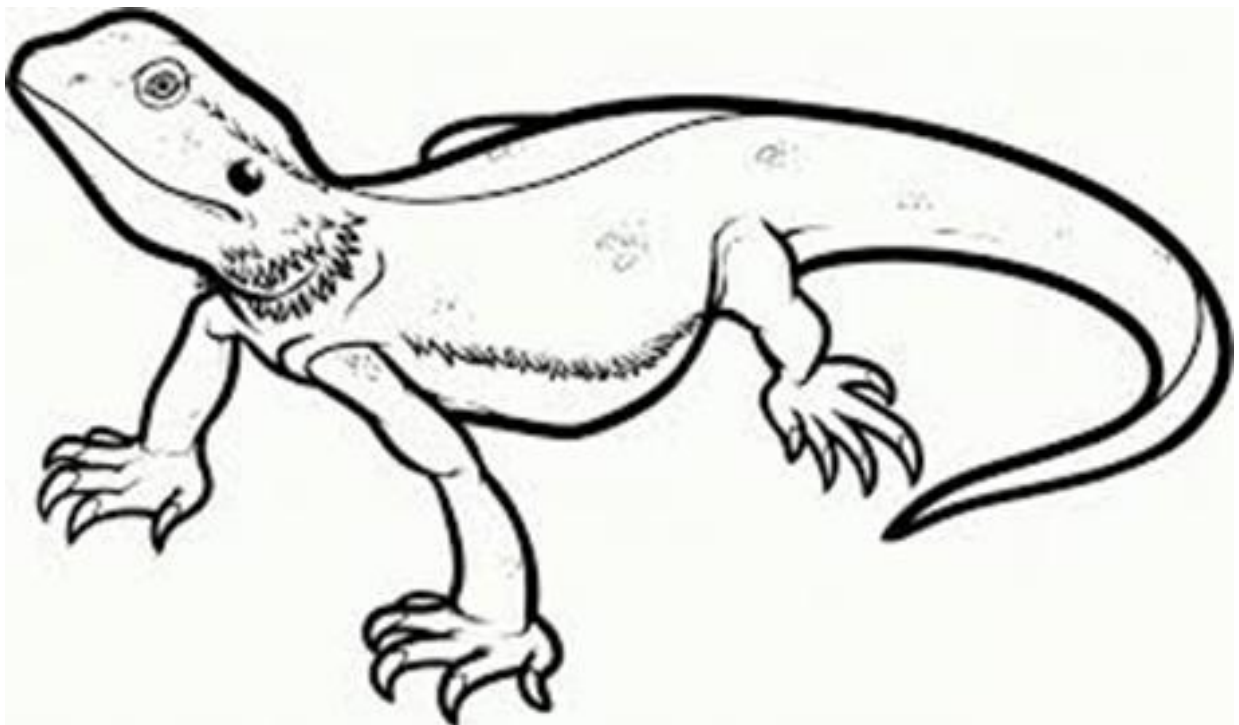
Instructions: Use a coloured pencil to draw a line between the pictures that are connected. Start from the sun and follow the energy as it would flow through the food chain. Change colour and draw another chain.



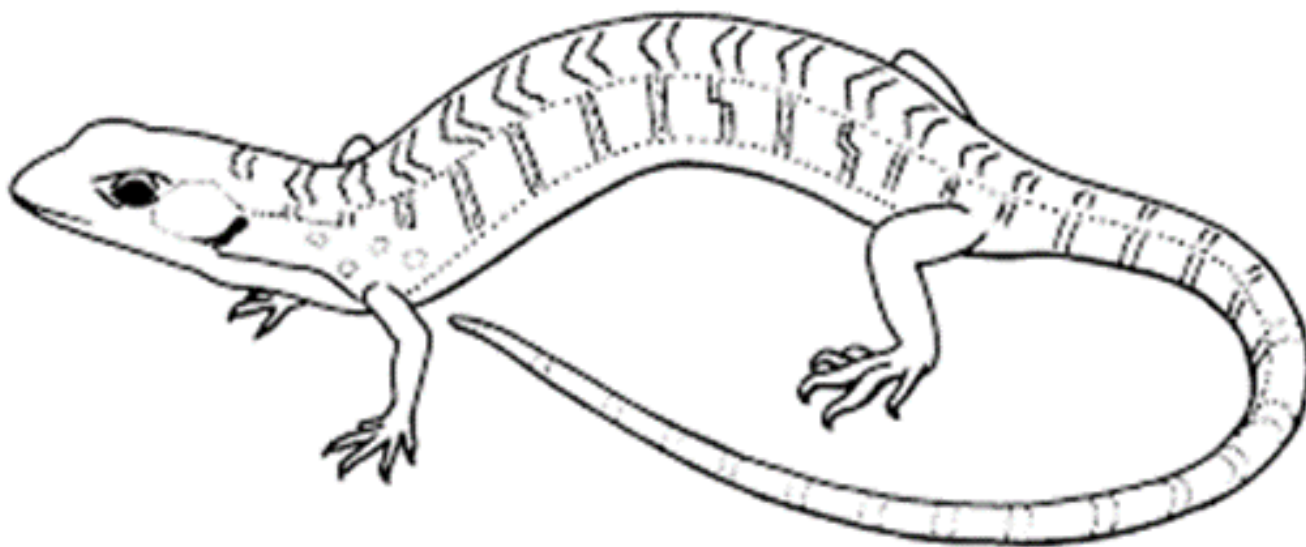
COLOUR ME IN: I'M A GECKO



COLOUR ME IN: I'M A DRAGON LIZARD



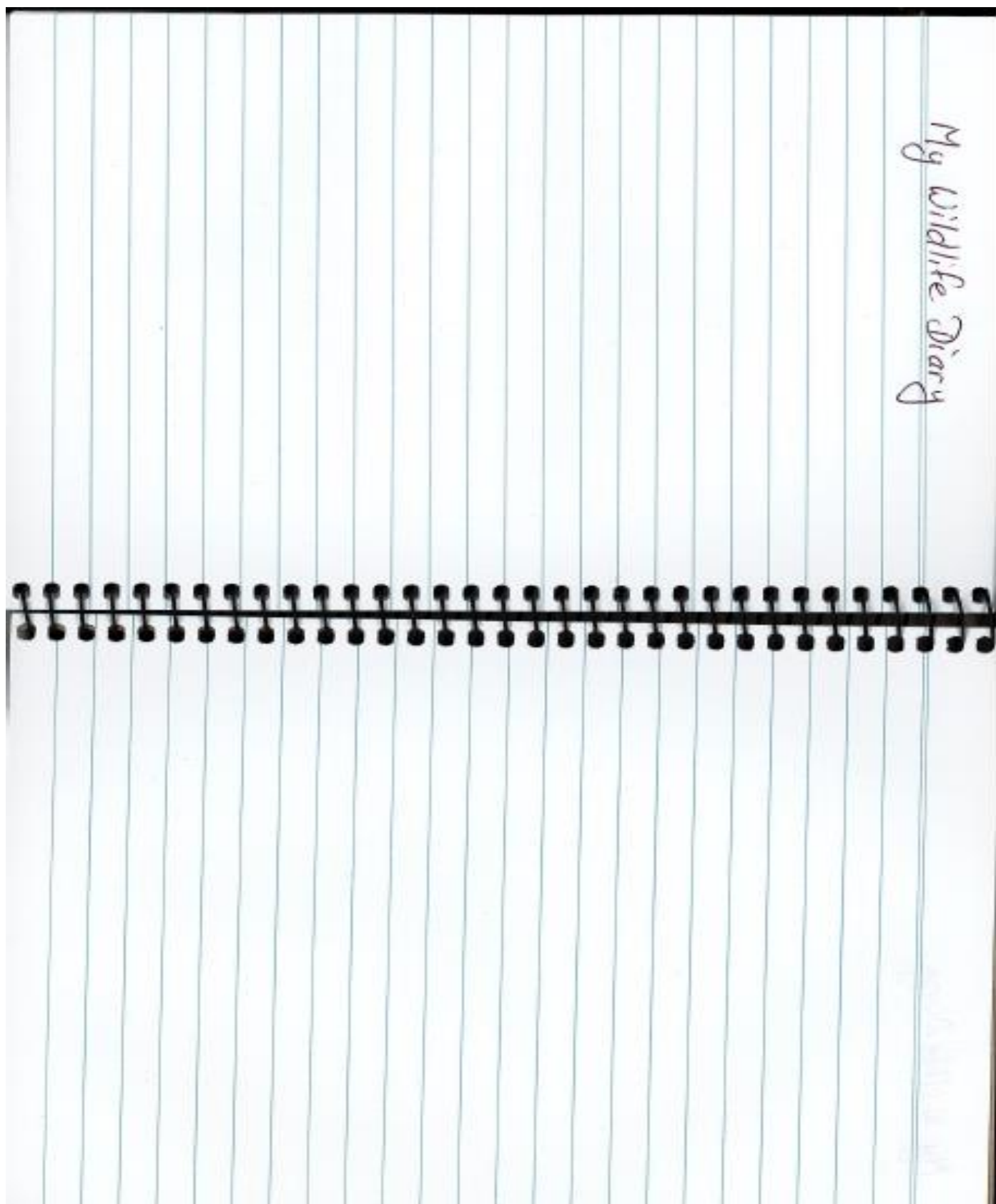
COLOUR ME IN: I'M A SKINK LIZARD



COLOUR ME IN: I'M A MONITOR LIZARD



USE THIS PAGE TO RECORD THE WILDLIFE YOU SEE THIS WEEK



FURTHER READING:

Australian Museum "Snakes, Lizards & other Reptiles"

<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/snakes-lizards-and-other-reptiles/>

Cogger, Harold, G. (1992) "Reptiles & Amphibians of Australia" Reed Books.

Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife "Backyard Buddies – Lizards"

<https://www.backyardbuddies.org.au/explore/reptiles/lizards>

Frankston City website (downloadable booklets)

https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment_and_Waste/Environment/Biodiversity

- Natural Reserves within Frankston City
- Indigenous Fauna Guide
- Indigenous Plant Guide
- Sustainable Gardening in Frankston City

Gould League of Victoria "Urban Wildlife" - a Survival Publication

Triggs, Barbara. (1996) "Tracks, Scats and Other Traces: a field guide to Australian mammals" - Oxford

Winters, Bob & The Gould League "Australian Guide to Frogs and Reptiles" Wilkinson Publishing.

Winters, Bob & The Gould League "Australian Guide to Garden Wildlife" Wilkinson Publishing.

LIZARDS OF FRANKSTON

Blotched blue-tongued lizard - regionally significant

Eastern blue-tongued lizard

White's skink

- regionally significant

Swamp skink

- vulnerable

Garden skink

Delicate skink

- regionally significant

Eastern three-lined skink

- regionally significant

Grass skink

Bougainville's skink

- locally significant

Southern water skink

Weasel skink

- regionally significant

Metallic skink

Glossy grass skink

Southern grass skink

Southern scaly-foot (legless lizard)

Marbled gecko

Jacky dragon (Tree dragon)

Tree goanna

-vulnerable



Happy Lizard Lounging!!