



BROADHEAD SKINK

CANDIDATE

Plestiodon Laticeps

photos-Tom Diez

General characteristics

The Broadhead Skink is the largest of three skinks that inhabit Pennsylvania. Adult sizes range from just over 6 inches to a bit more than 12 inches, including the tail. The minimum length of an adult Broadhead Skink is barely less than the maximum size attained by Pennsylvania's other skinks. The Broadhead Skink is most active during the day, similar to others of the family. It has been placed on Pennsylvania's List of Candidate Species.

Identification

The outstanding characteristic of this skink is its head. On the male, it is large and gives the impression of having swollen cheeks. The body of this reptile is brown to olive-brown, and the breeding males are striking with their orange-red heads. There may be five light stripes down the body of both sexes during their early adult life, but these usually fade with age to become indistinguishable in the fully adult male. The juveniles are black with a bright blue tail. Five to seven brilliant yellow stripes are quite evident on the young, but patterns and colors fade with age and length.

Range

Pennsylvania is on the extreme northern limit of this reptile's range. It is found only in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania and extends to central Florida. It ranges as far west as Kansas.

Habitat

Largely a woodland creature, the Broadhead Skink is the most arboreal of Pennsylvania's skinks. It likes moist woods but also resides in open areas that provide adequate protection in the form of vegetative debris or other matter.

Reproduction

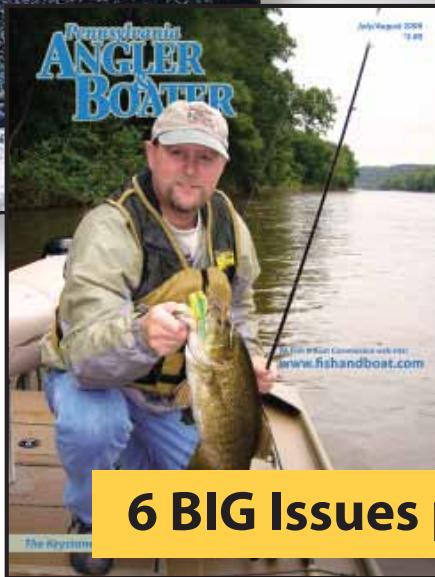
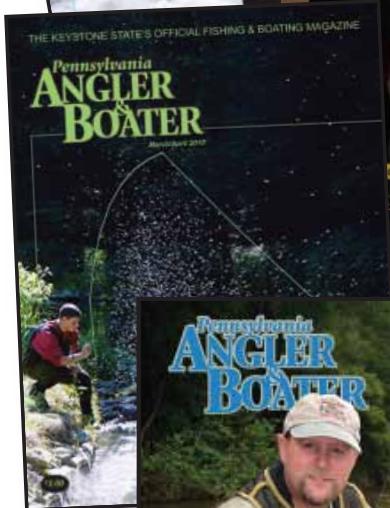
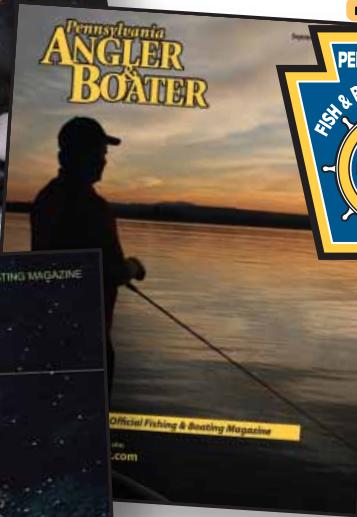
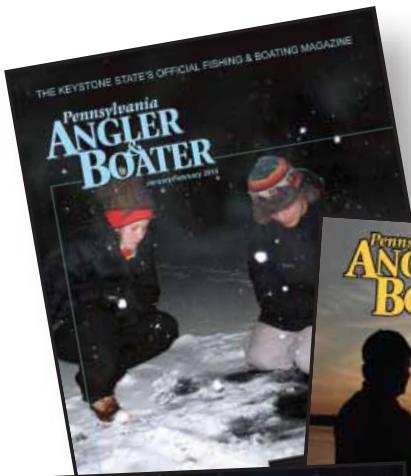
The Broadhead Skink seeks its mate during April or May. In May until July, the female deposits six to 18 eggs, usually in a small depression excavated in a rotting stump, dead tree or under rocks or other cover on the forest floor. The eggs hatch in late July to mid-August, after having been tended carefully by the female.

Food

Insects, snails and spiders make up the major portion of the diet. A good climber, this skink hunts high in the trees in search of a meal, where it may also take advantage of cavities or small holes for temporary protection from unexpected cool temperatures. ☐



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