

Another Tall “Tail”?

The Red-Headed Scorpion

Broadhead Skink

(*Plestiodon laticeps*)

Many animals inspire tall tales. The broadhead skink is not an exception, as its nickname “red-headed scorpion” implies. Broadhead skinks earn this nickname, because they dwarf all other Pennsylvania lizards and skinks by measuring up to 12-inches long. They also have a very broad head that turns fire-engine red during mating season. These two characteristics make some people think that they are venomous predators. However, broadhead skinks are not **venomous**. They eat insects, spiders and other small lizards or mammals.

The best way to identify a broadhead skink is by their size. No other lizards in Pennsylvania compare to their size. Juveniles usually have five white or yellowish lines, two on each side and one in the middle of their back. These lines fade as they mature. Adults are a uniform gray or brown color.

In Pennsylvania, they are found only in the southeast corner of the state. If you are trying to spot one, don't look on the ground. They are arboreal, live in trees, and spend their days lounging in tree branches. If you do find one, do not touch it. If they are handled improperly, they may lose their tail. When a broadhead skink loses its tail, it makes it harder for them to survive.

Considered a **candidate species**, their survival is very important. There are very few broadhead skinks left in Pennsylvania, so please be careful and observe them from a distance.



Broadhead Skink

Candidate species

are species that could become an endangered or threatened species in the future.