

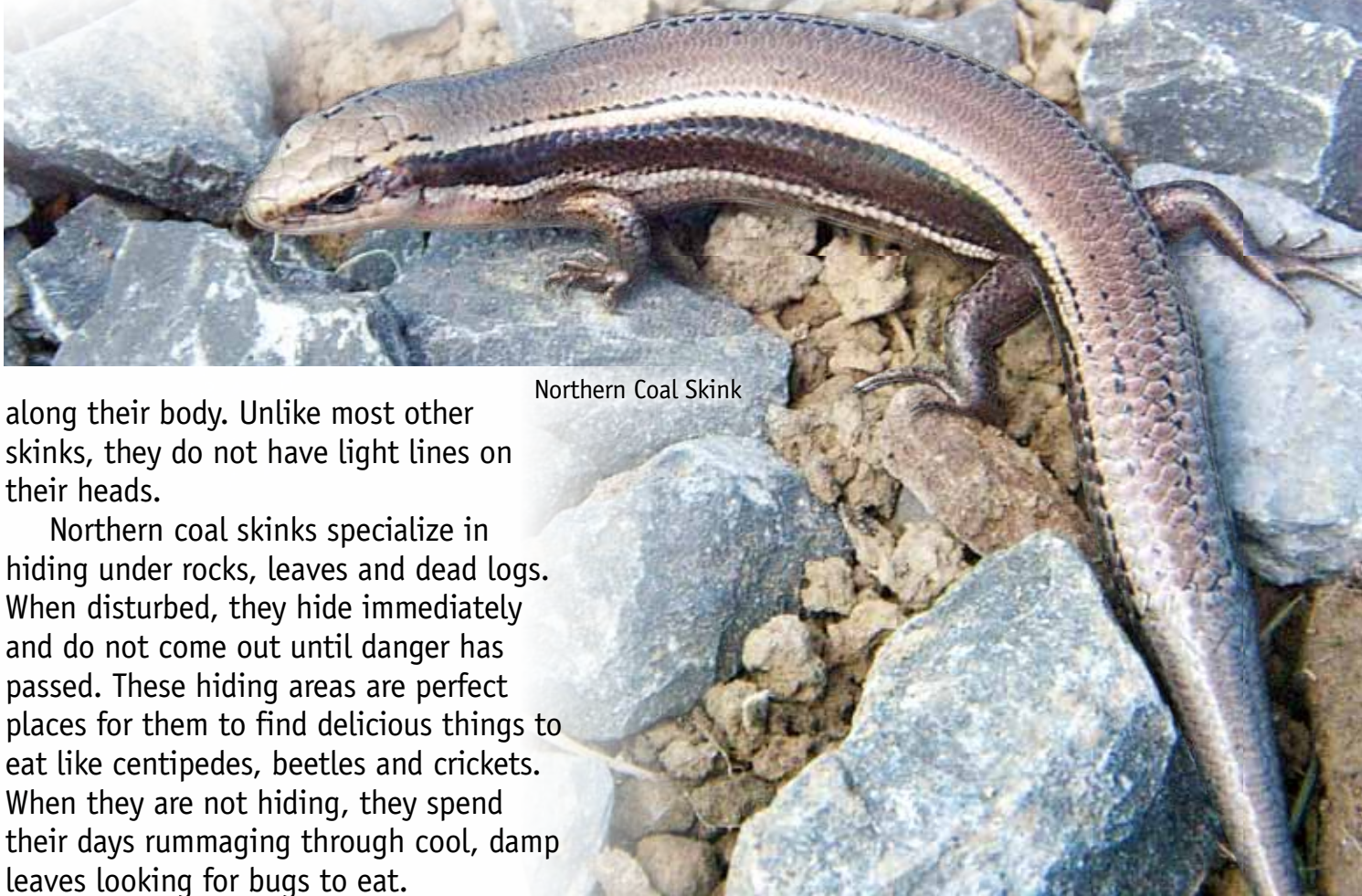
# Don't blink or you may miss this "COOL" skink

## Northern Coal Skink

(*Plestiodon anthracinus anthracinus*)

Looking "cool" with a dark band beginning around its eyes and extending all the way to its tail, the northern coal skink may remind you a bit of "Zorro" or another masked hero. This skink can be found throughout parts of Pennsylvania's bituminous coal or soft coal region. So, you may think that the word "coal" originated from this region. However, its name actually refers to the "coal" colored band that runs the length of its body. Though they are not found in great numbers, they can be found from northcentral to northwestern Pennsylvania.

When mature, northern coal skinks measure about 7-inches long. Their body is brown and has two pairs of light stripes that enclose the dark band extending



Northern Coal Skink

along their body. Unlike most other skinks, they do not have light lines on their heads.

Northern coal skinks specialize in hiding under rocks, leaves and dead logs. When disturbed, they hide immediately and do not come out until danger has passed. These hiding areas are perfect places for them to find delicious things to eat like centipedes, beetles and crickets. When they are not hiding, they spend their days rummaging through cool, damp leaves looking for bugs to eat.