

# Little Brown Skinks and the Department of Defense

The Little Brown Skink (*Scincella lateralis*), frequently called ground skink, is the most common lizard species confirmed present on military lands. Easily overlooked, it may be found in forest leaf litter, as well as residential lawns.

**Description:** Little Brown Skinks are small lizards with long tails and short legs. Adults attain lengths of 3-5.5 in (7.5-14.5 cm). They are a coppery brown with a darker stripe running along each side of the body, and a white or yellowish belly. Unlike other skink species in our area, juveniles resemble adults, and lack blue tails.

**Range:** This lizard's large range extends from New Jersey to southern Florida, west to Kansas, Texas, and northeastern Mexico, north to southern Illinois, southern Indiana, and southern Ohio, and south to the Gulf Coast.

**Habitat:** Little Brown Skinks are generally found in areas with loose soil, preferring moist (but not damp) and dry sites. They are usually seen among leaves on the forest floor, but occasionally are found in open areas, even mowed lawns. Logs, boards, and other objects provide important cover.

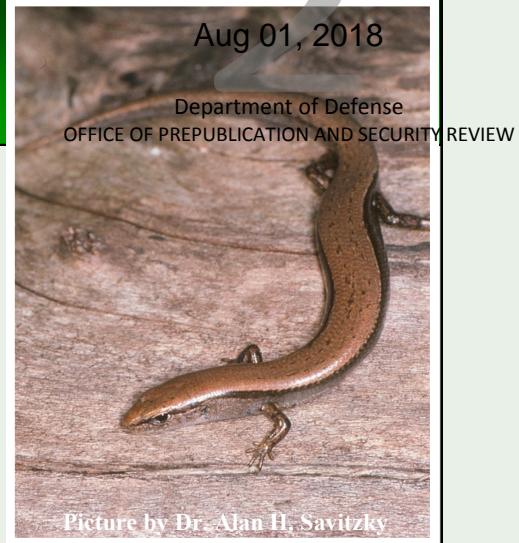


**Behavior:** These ground-dwelling lizards are active during the day, frequently venturing from cover objects to forage. They do not climb trees. Prey items consist of small insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. Females lay clutches of several eggs in moist soil or rotten wood. Several clutches may be produced each season. Unlike other skinks of the region, female Little Brown Skinks do not protect their nests. Home ranges of less than 215 sq. ft (20 sq. m) have been recorded.

**Military Interactions:** This species commonly occurs on DoD properties in the eastern U.S., both in military training and housing areas. It is the most common lizard species (second is the Common Five-lined Skink) confirmed present on DoD properties.

**Conservation Status:** The Little Brown Skink has no federal conservation status. It is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in four states at the periphery of its range. It has a NatureServe Raking of G5-Secure, and is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN Red list.

**Threats/Planning Considerations:** Threats to this species include destruction and fragmentation of habitats. A habitat management practice to benefit this species is to restore and/or maintain patches of deciduous forest with intact leaf litter and ample ground cover (fallen logs, etc.).



Picture by Dr. Alan H. Savitzky

Occurrence on Military Lands	
Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 101 military properties (18 Air Force; 43 Army; 9 Marine Corps; and 31 Navy).	Up to an additional 64 military properties (19 Air Force; 14 Army; and 31 Navy).

