

BROADHEAD SKINK

Eumeces laticeps

These impressive lizards are common residents of the southeastern U.S. They can be seen racing up the trunk of a large oak tree or resting in a patch of sunlight on the forest floor. Some local residents call these lizards “scorpions” under the false assumption that they have a venomous bite or sting. A bite from a skink is no more than a harmless pinch. However, ingesting one of these lizards can make some animals very sick. Cats and dogs occasionally die from the strong neurological poison after eating one. Broadhead skinks pose no threat to humans and are quite beneficial at controlling pests. They are ravenous feeders preying on insects, spiders and even small



Adult male Broadhead skink.



Broadhead skink hatchlings emerging from a rotten log.



Juvenile Broadhead skinks can easily be confused with two similar skink species.

lizards and mammals. Female skinks lay from 8 to 12 eggs in the early spring in a rotten log or stump. Skinks will guard their eggs for a couple of months until the 2½ to 3½-inch-long hatchlings emerge. Baby “Broadheads” have a bold striped pattern and a **bright blue tail** which gradually fades as they mature. Adult females retain some of the striped pattern but males turn a solid **olive to tan color** with a **red or orange head**. The **bright red** coloration signifies the breeding season where males fight savagely with rivals to defend their territory. The same jaws which easily subdue large insects and other invertebrates aid in the fierce combat. In the southeastern U.S. we have three very similar skink species. As juveniles, the Broadhead, the Five-lined and the Southeastern five-lined skinks all look very similar making identification difficult.

*This information is provided as a public service by **The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory Outreach Office**, located on the Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C. For more information, call Tony Mills at (803) 725-9725 or Lindy Nowak at (803) 725-0156. You may also visit us at: www.uga.edu/srel/outreach.htm*