

Shore Skink (*Oligosoma smithi*)



The first of several lizard species to come, Shore Skink was introduced to Matakohē-Limestone Island just before Christmas 2007, a great present for the island.



The Shore Skink is always found close to the shoreline, inhabiting the upper beach area especially where cobbles abound, often the same places where wind and tide accumulate driftwood and mats of seaweed. Shore Skink are active during the day and eat mainly sandhoppers and other arthropods.

Like other native lizards, populations had declined due to predation and loss of habitat - they had disappeared completely from Matakohē-Limestone Island.

An enthusiastic group of volunteers, led by Cathy Mitchell (Island Ranger) and ably assisted by lizard expert, Marleen Baling, captured thirty Shore Skinks at Mimiwhangata in mid-November 2007. The skinks were held in quarantine at Massey University, Albany Campus while they underwent disease screening to ensure only healthy lizard were translocated.



◀ Good habitat, loose cobbles and mats of seaweed on the beach at Mimiwhangata

The group catching yet another Shore Skink ▶



◀ Te Warihi Heteraka, as a representative of Ngatiwai, and Te Ihi Tito and Freddy Tito as representatives of Te Parawhau welcomed and blessed the skinks on their arrival to Matakohē-Limestone Island in December 2007, just three days before Christmas.



▲ About 20 people from Iwi, the Society, DoC, and members of the public helped release the lizards along 20 meters of suitable shoreline on Matakohē-Limestone Island.

It was pleasing to note that many of the female skinks had increased their weight while held at the Massey Campus and were considered to be gravid (pregnant) when released. Monitoring is planned for 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 and 15 years following release, and will hopefully show the lizards have not only survived but have made good progress toward a self-sustaining population of Shore Skink on Matakohē-Limestone Island.

The website has more information about Shore Skink, a 2 page summary (133KB PDF) or a really technical report (10 pages, 364KB PDF), both can be found through the Society Publications webpage.