

The Sand Skink

A THREATENED SPECIES

PROTECTED BY FEDERAL LAW

LEGAL PROTECTION

The sand skink is protected by Federal law under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Under this act, it is listed as a Threatened Species. This means that it is likely to become endangered in the future throughout all or a large portion of its range.

FDOT

Wildlife Survey in
Progress

Do not Mow
or
Disturb

The Sand Skink

A THREATENED SPECIES



INFORMATION
FOR
FLORIDA LANDOWNERS



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DESCRIPTION

The sand skink (*Plestiodon* [=Neoseps] *reynoldsi*) is a small beige to gray-colored lizard, which grows to about five inches long. They have shiny scales, a wedge-shaped head, and very short, barely noticeable, legs. They spend most of their lives underground.

LIFE HISTORY

The sand skink leaves distinctive “S”-shaped wavy trails (see photo) as it moves through the sand, near the surface, using a “swimming” motion. Sand skinks feed mainly on small insects, including termites. Sand skinks are most active in the spring during breeding season.



DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

The sand skink is only found in Central Florida (see map), in very dry habitats with sandy soils. The sand skink primarily requires loose sand with patches of sparse vegetation and the presence of leaf litter. The sand skink typically lives in very dry scrub habitats but may utilize other areas such as pastures and citrus groves, which are generally located close to its preferred habitat.



FDOT SURVEYS FOR SAND SKINKS

The sand skink is listed as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), which means it's protected from harassment and taking. Because of this, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) must conduct surveys in areas where construction may occur to determine if sand skinks are present.

FDOT uses methods established by the USFWS to determine if sand skinks are present. These methods include visual inspection of a project area to find the “S”-shaped wavy trails left by the sand skink and cover board surveys. Cover board surveys are the placement of labeled, 2-foot square, pieces of plywood on the ground in the project area. A minimum of 40 boards per acre are placed within the project area. These boards may be in place for five weeks or more from February through May. To place the boards, all vegetation beneath the boards must be removed. Once the boards have been allowed to remain in place for at least a week, the ground beneath the boards is checked weekly for a month for signs of sand skinks. After the survey is completed, the boards are removed. The FDOT will return the cleared area under the boards back to its original condition.

SAND SKINK SURVEY COVER BOARDS



HOW LANDOWNERS CAN HELP

Landowners need to do nothing at all to assist in the survey. All that is requested is to not disturb the boards or the areas around them. If a landowner feels that the boards are a problem or pose a safety hazard, they should contact the FDOT at 863.519.2805.

