

# Shingleback Lizard

*Tiliqua rugosa*



My name is **Gramps** (short for Grandpa).

I got my name because I am very slow moving and am quite old.

I love to spend time warming up my body under the sun or a heat lamp.

## WHO AM I?

The Shingleback lizard is the largest of the blue-tongue family. It is closely related to some lizard species you may know, such as the Blue-tongue lizard, and the Common garden skink.

These lizards are adapted for **camouflage** which means they blend in with their surroundings. They are usually dark brown sometimes with lighter patches. They have large heads with short stumpy tails, small reddish-brown eyes and large rough **scales**. Shingleback lizards are not very agile due to their short legs and small claws, but they do have large mouths and strong jaw muscles. They also have bright blue tongues.

Being a **reptile**, they are **ectothermic**. This means that they cannot produce their own body heat and so rely on an external source, such as the sun or a warm rock, to raise their body temperature.

### LOCAL INDIGENOUS NAME

**Waddaduri** – Stumpy lizard  
Wiradjuri language in New  
South Wales

### QUICK I.D KEY

**Status:**

Least Concern.

**Diet:**

Omnivore

**Size:**

Weight 600 - 900g.

Length 34 - 41cm.

**Average Lifespan:**

20 - 25 years in the wild.

+40 years in captivity.

**Habitat:**

Open semiarid grassland  
plains and woodlands.

## FINDING A SHINGLEBACK LIZARD

Shingleback lizards are widespread across Australia's temperate regions within south QLD, central VIC, NSW and southern WA.

The perfect **habitat** for these lizards are open grassland and woodland regions, with plenty of ground cover and shelter for them to seek protection from **predators**. Logs, rocks, grasses, shrubs and leaf litter are just some of the places where Shingleback lizards like to take cover during the night and colder weather.

After the sun has come up in the early morning these lizards emerge to **bask** in sunny areas before they begin to **forage** for food in the warmer parts of the day.

# BEHAVING LIKE A SHINGLEBACK LIZARD

Shingleback lizards are **omnivores**, feeding on both plants and animals. Due to being a slow-moving species, they eat mostly plants but can catch insects such as snails and beetles.

Shingleback lizards have several **adaptations** they use to protect themselves from **predators**. The first **adaptation** is a tail that looks like their head. This is a **defence mechanism** used to confuse **predators**. If they feel **threatened**, they will wiggle their tail to draw attention away from their head. Being bitten on the tail instead of the head means the Shingleback has a greater chance of escape and **survival**. Another surprising adaptation is their bright blue tongue. If approached by a **predator**, Shinglebacks will turn towards them, open up their big mouths and stick out their bright blue tongue as a warning. In the wild, blue is a warning colour that often signals poison. Though this is a trick as they are not poisonous at all! Finally, they have very tough 'armour like' **scales** which protect them from both **predatory** attacks and the harsh bush floor.

Shingleback lizards are **monogamous**, which means they mate with only one partner for life. Although Shingleback lizards are **reptiles**, they do not lay **eggs**, but give birth to **live young**. The mother will give birth to 2 to 3 huge babies, about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the mother's size. That is equivalent to a human giving birth to an 8 -year-old child! This means their babies are ready to take care of themselves more quickly.



## FAST FACTS

Shingleback lizards have many other names: Stumpy-tailed lizard; Pinecone lizard; Sleepy lizard; Bobtail lizard and Two-headed lizard.

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Females have a slightly pointed tail. Males have a rounded tail.

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Wild lizards can survive without water for two whole weeks.

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They have fat stores in their tail for times of limited food availability.

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Indigenous tribes have found Shingleback lizards to be a great food source

## THREATS

The Shingleback lizard's conservation status is **Least Concern**, however they still face many **threats** that impact their survival.

Being a small species, they are often **prey** for native and **introduced** predators. Of greatest concern are **Feral** cats, dogs and foxes.

**Land clearing** for cattle and farming impacts the Shingleback lizard through **habitat destruction**.

Inappropriate fire regimes cause **habitat destruction** by removing ground cover such as logs and leaf litter. Controlled burns today are occurring more often and do not allow for the escape of ground dwelling reptiles.