



Southern North Island forest gecko

Lizards in gardens in the lower North Island

WELLINGTON LIZARDS

- Brown skink
- Common skink
- Copper skink
- Ornate skink
- Spotted skink
- Common gecko
- "Marlborough mini" gecko

Southern North Island forest gecko

Wellington green gecko

This fact sheet should be used with the fact sheets *Lizards in gardens* and *Gardening for lizards* to help you create a garden to provide habitat and food suitable for the lizards in your area.

Visit our website www.doc.govt.nz and search for "lizards".

Nine species of lizard may be found in urban environments in the lower North Island. Some more threatened species are found only on mammal-free offshore islands, such as Kapiti, Mana and Matiu/Somes.

Forest geckos are not threatened.



Recognition

Forest geckos can be grey, brown or greeny-brown and generally have attractive markings that give them good camouflage in the forest. They have a distinctive "V"-shaped mark on the head between their eyes and a white band that runs from the corner of the eye to the ear. Their toes are slender in contrast to common geckos which have relatively short broad toes.

Different gecko species can be distinguished by the colour inside the mouth. Forest geckos have an orange mouth, common geckos pink and green geckos vivid blue.



The forest gecko has a "V"-shaped mark between the eyes.

	FOREST GECKO	COMMON GECKO	WELLINGTON GREEN GECKO
INSIDE MOUTH	 Orange	 Pink	 Blue
TOES	 Long and slender	 Relatively short; broad pads	



Habitat preference and behaviour

Forest geckos are probably found in most older forest, but may also persist in remnant stands, scrubby vegetation and manuka and kanuka scrubland. Forest geckos spend the majority of their life in the canopy and so are rarely seen.

Gardening tips

Forest geckos spend most of their life in trees, and because of this they are not seen often. But even though you may never see forest geckos in your garden, there's plenty to do to help protect them. Plant trees closely so the canopy connects allowing them free movement without the need to go to the ground. Encourage vines and climbers up larger trees (some climbers may need to be pruned periodically to stop them smothering trees), place bark under the climbers or tie bark onto the tree with biodegradable string. Forest geckos will hide in dense foliage or in clusters of epiphytes (plants that live on other plants in the canopy) and these habitats can be mimicked by tying suitable species to trees or using hanging baskets in trees. Encouraging epiphytes to grow on trees increases diversity and food for geckos and provides extra cover. Manuka and kanuka flowers are favoured for their nectar when in flower.

Off with the old...



Poor Knights gecko sloughing its skin.
Photo: Rod Morris.

Each year geckos grow new skin and shed their old skin in a process known as sloughing. You may find old sloughed skin under rocks or in retreat sites used by the gecko.

The skin often comes off intact or in large pieces, looking much like the gecko's pyjamas! In contrast, skinks slough their skin as individual scales which are very difficult to find.

