Habits and habitats: Study of captive chevron skinks.

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ABSTRACT:
The endangered chevron skink (*Oligosoma homalonotum*) has been a focal species of conservation management on Great Barrier Island in the recent years. Management of this species has included habitat conservation, which places emphasis on understanding the habitat preferences and also the general behaviour of the chevron skink. This study concentrates on the behavioural ecology, particularly habitat use and refuge use of chevron skinks in captivity. Three individuals were introduced into separate outdoor enclosures supporting two habitats (vegetated and unvegetated areas) supplied with ground and arboreal refuges. Daily activity and macro and microhabitat use of the skinks was recorded between August to October 2002. Due to the small sample size, data were analysed separately for each individual. Each skink showed varied preferences for macro and microhabitat, which can be explained by individual differences. However, results do indicate that the high site fidelity after refuge selection consequentially determined the primary type of macro and microhabitat used for each skink. Skinks were found to utilise arboreal refuges, but none of the artificial ground refuges provided. All captive skinks had the highest frequency of being seen during mid-day, and the varied individual emergence time from refuge is likely to be influence by sun. The results supports other studies conducted in the field, where similarity of captive behaviour to the wild suggests a positive role of captive studies and this opens possibilities of detailed observation studies or testing new techniques in captivity before applying them in the wild.