



Skinks of India

Why in News

Recently, the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** brought a **study on skinks (a kind of lizard)**, titled **Skinks of India**.



Key Points

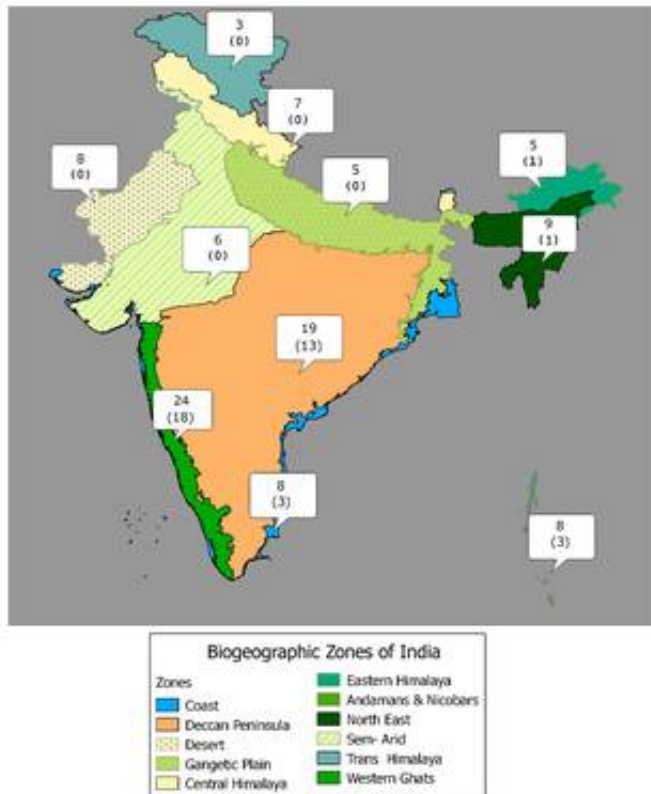
▪ Skinks:

- With 1,602 species of skinks across the world, It is the **largest family of lizards**, having long bodies, relatively small or no legs, no pronounced neck and glossy scales.
- It is found around homes, garages, and open spaces such as parks and school playgrounds, and around lakes.
- Skinks are **non-venomous, highly alert, agile and fast moving** and actively **forage for a variety of insects and small invertebrates**.
- They have a **prominent role in maintaining ecosystems**, however, **not much is known about their breeding habits, and ecology** because identification of the species can be confusing.
- In India **skinks are found in all kinds of habitats** in the country, from the Himalayas to the coasts and from dense forests to the deserts.

▪ The Study:

- It gives a **phylogenetic** (evolutionary development) and **bio-geographical analysis** of

distribution of these species in all the **11 bio-geographic zones of India**.



SKINK SPECIES DISTRIBUTION IN DIFFERENT BIOGEOGRAPHIC ZONES OF INDIA (ENDEMIC SPECIES IN BRACKETS)

- India is **home to less than 4% of the skinks** across the globe. **62 species of skinks** are found in India and about 57% of them (**33 species**) are **endemic**.
- India is home to **16 genera of skinks**, **four of which are endemic**. The four genera of skinks are:

- **Sepsophis**: *Sepsophis punctatus* is endemic to the northern part of Eastern Ghats
- **Barkudia**: They are limbless skinks found in the hills and coastal plains of the eastern coast.
 - **Barkudia insularis** is believed to be found only in the Barkud Island in Chilka lake in Odisha.
 - **Barkudia melanosticta** is endemic to Visakhapatnam.
- **Kaestlea**: They are also known as **blue-tailed ground skinks** and are endemic to the Western Ghats.
- **Ristella**: They are also known as **Cat skinks** and endemic to the southern part of Western Ghats.

Zoological Survey of India

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), a subordinate organization of the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** was **established in 1916**.
- It is a national centre for **faunistic survey** and exploration of the resources leading to the **advancement of knowledge** on the exceptionally **rich faunal diversity of the country**.
- It has its **headquarters at Kolkata** and 16 regional stations located in different geographic locations of the country.

Source: TH

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