



Scincus fasciatus.

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SCINCUS FASCIATUS.—*Linnæus*.*Plate XVIII.*

CHARACTERS. Head above bluish-black, marked with six straw-coloured lines, the two superior unite at the occiput; body above bluish-black, with five straw-coloured longitudinal lines; tail rich ultra-marine blue.

SYNONYMES. Blue-tailed lizard, *Catesby*, Carol., vol. ii. p. 67, pl. lxvii.

*Lacerta fasciata*, *Linnæus*, Syst. Nat., ed. x., vol. i. p. 209.

*Lacerta fasciata*, *Linnæus*, Syst. Nat., ed. xii., p. 369.

Blue-tailed lizard, *Pennant*, Arc. Zool., vol. ii. p. 334.

*Lacerta fasciata*, *Gmelin*, Syst. Nat. Lin., vol. i. p. 1075.

*Scincus quinquelineatus*, *Schneider*, Hist. Amph., fas. ii. p. 202, *variety*.

*Scincus quinquelineatus*, *Daudin*, Hist. Nat. des Rept., tom. iv. p. 272, *variety* i. p. 275.

*Lacerta fasciata*, *Shaw*, Gen. Zool., vol. iii. p. 241.

*Euprepis fasciatus*, *Wagler*, Natürlich. Syst. der Amphib., p. 162.

*Plestiodon quinquelineatus*, *Dumeril et Bibron*, Hist. Nat. des Rept., tom. v. p. 707.

*Scincus quinquelineatus*, *Harlan*, Med. and Phys. Res., p. 138.

Blue-tailed Lizard, *Vulgo*.

DESCRIPTION. The head is short, broad behind, with the snout a little pointed and rounded. The vertical plate is hexagonal, broader before, narrow behind. There are five occipital plates; the two anterior are quadrilateral and smaller; and of the three posterior, the central is elongated, narrow and rhomboidal, broad and angled in front, narrow and rounded behind; back of the occipital are large scales, and on the sides temporal plates. There are four large superior orbital plates, of which the two central are largest; there are three small posterior orbital, and four larger anterior orbital plates; while the inferior wall of the orbit



is sustained by the sixth and seventh superior labial plates. The frontal are irregularly quadrilateral, with their internal angles elongated; the centro-frontal is hexagonal, broadest transversely; and the anterior frontal are sub-quadrilateral and rounded in front. The rostral plate is large, pentagonal, hollowed below and angled above. The nasal are rounded and single on each side.

The nostrils are very near the snout, and lateral, but opening upwards and outwards. There are eight quadrilateral superior labial plates, sixth and seventh largest. The eyes are rather small, the pupil dark, the iris golden, the eye-lids dark brown, with an internal narrow yellow margin. The external meatus of the ear is oval and vertical, the tympanum pale flesh colour.

The body is elongated, cylindrical, and covered above with small rhomboidal scales, imbricated, and arranged in longitudinal rows.

The throat and abdomen are covered with scales approaching the hexagonal form, but are so rounded posteriorly and so imbricated as to appear semicircular.

The tail is cylindrical, very long, and covered above with scales, larger than those on the back; below there is a central row of large plates, resembling those of the Boa. These plates begin about one inch behind the vent, between which and their commencement are three rows of imbricated scales; while in the *Scincus quinquelineatus* there are five rows of scales, which extend to half the length of the tail. The vent is transverse, with two large and two smaller scales in front.

The anterior extremities are short, and covered with scales nearly hexagonal, but with their external angle rounded; there are five fingers, distinct, and each furnished with a small delicate and curved nail. The posterior extremities are well developed, covered with scales similar to the anterior; there are five long slender toes, each with a short curved nail.



**COLOUR.** The head and body above are beautiful bluish-black; the upper jaw is dusky, and the lower jaw bluish-white. A straw-coloured or yellowish-white line begins near each nostril, and unite at the occiput into a longitudinal vertebral line, which becomes pale blue as it passes the posterior extremities, and finally terminates about the anterior third of the tail; this line includes the half of two contiguous scales, and has regular margins. Above and in front of the orbit of the eye, begins another line of the same colour, or a little more yellow; it takes the same course, assumes the same blue colour when it has passed the posterior extremities, and terminates nearly at the same distance on the tail. Beneath this latter line is placed still another, which begins below and in front of the orbit, is interrupted at the external meatus, again recommences behind it, and is continued over the shoulder along the flanks to the end of the tail; these two lines include the upper half of one row of scales, and have their inferior borders only straight. Between these yellowish-white lines the scales of the back are so imbricated as to appear braided, like a whip-cord.

The throat and abdomen are white.

The anterior third of the tail is coloured like the back, but lighter, and the five lines are of delicate pale blue; beyond this the colour of the tail is the richest ultra-marine blue above, and a little paler below.

The anterior extremities are brownish above and silver-white below, with a yellowish-white longitudinal line along the posterior face of the shoulder and forearm. The posterior extremities are coloured like the anterior, and have a similar longitudinal line on their posterior surface; but this only extends the length of the thigh.

**DIMENSIONS.** Length of head,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lines; length of body, from head to vent, 2 inches 5 lines; length of tail beyond the vent, 5 inches; length of femur, 6 lines; of leg, 6 lines; of tarsus and toes, 9 lines: total length,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

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**HABITS.** The *Scincus fasciatus* is found in shady places, principally in forests of oak, and frequently under the bark of decaying trees. It feeds on various species of insects, and is very lively and rapid in its motions; and as it climbs with facility, is not easily taken alive. It very seldom, however, takes to trees, unless to escape its pursuers; but, like the *Scincus quinquelineatus*, is almost always found on the ground, or on the trunks of fallen trees, which it chooses for its basking place.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.** This animal is found in several of the Atlantic states; Haldeman has observed it in Pennsylvania; Dr. Geddings in Maryland; I have seen it in the Carolinas, and I have received specimens from Virginia and from Georgia near Florida: nor is the *Scincus fasciatus* confined to the Atlantic states, for Dr. Pickering observed it in Ohio, and Dr. Pitcher in the state of Michigan.

**GENERAL REMARKS.** It is not a little singular that this animal should have been so frequently confounded with the *Scincus quinquelineatus*, when they are so entirely distinct, as may readily be seen by a reference to the accompanying plates. Catesby first described the *Scincus fasciatus*, and gave a tolerable plate of it, under the name Blue-tailed Lizard, in his *History of Carolina, &c.* Linnæus next received it in the tenth edition of his *Systema Naturæ*, under the name *Lacerta fasciata*; nor can there be any doubt of his meaning, for his first reference is to Catesby's "*lacerta cauda cerulea*," his second to Pettiver,\* which reference must go for little, as no one can positively determine at this time what animal Pettiver had in view. The same description and the same references are continued in his twelfth and last edition; although here for the first time appears, as a new species, the *Lacerta (Scincus) quinquelineata* sent him by Garden. Gmelin also, in his edition of the *Systema Naturæ*, received very properly the *Scincus fasciatus* and *Scincus quinquelineatus* as different species.

\* *Gaz. Nat. et Art.*, pl. i., fig. 1.



Schneider appears to have been the first to consider these two animals as nearly identical; for, in describing the *Scincus quinquelineatus*, he says: "Forte Linnæi fasciata lacerta Carolinensis hinc non multum abludit;" and in this he has been followed by most Naturalists, as Latreille, Daudin, Dumeril and Bibron, &c., with the exception of Shaw.

That they are distinct animals, I believe; for,

1. Their whole colour is different. In the *Scincus quinquelineatus* the head is pale red; the body olive, tinged with green, with a broad, black, lateral band; the tail dusky; while in the *Scincus fasciatus* the head and body are bluish-black; the six lines about the head and five of the body are constant, and the tail always a beautiful ultra-marine blue: nor is this colour the result of injury, as some have supposed, for the colour is the more brilliant the younger the animal, as I have seen in hundreds of instances.

2. And besides there is a difference of disposition of the plates and scales under the tail in the two animals, as above described.

3. The geographical distribution of animals would, if it were properly known, go far in determining the identity of species; thus the *Scincus quinquelineatus* is a southern animal, and has never yet been found, as far as I know, north of Virginia, though abundant in the Carolinas, Georgia, and the more southern and western states, ascending high up the valley of the Mississippi; while the *Scincus fasciatus* inhabits the Atlantic states from Maine to Florida; but I am not aware that it exists west of the Mississippi.

Nor am I yet prepared to believe with Temminck and Schlegel, that our *Scincus quinquelineatus* is identical with a Japanese animal, though there may be a great resemblance between them. Similar animals are frequently found within similar parallels of latitude, or, it might rather be said, where the temperature is nearly the same. Thus, in France and Germany are found the Common Toad, *Bufo*

vulgaris, the *Rana esculenta*, the *Rana temporaria*, all of which are beautifully represented in the northern parts of the United States by the *Bufo Americanus*, the *Rana helecina*, and the *Rana sylvatica*; while in South Carolina many of the animals of Egypt (nearly in the same parallel) are represented by many closely allied species—the Crocodile by the Alligator, the *Trionyx Ægyptiacus* by the *Trionyx ferox*, &c. &c. Yet none of these animals are identical.

I cannot place this and the preceding animal as Dumeril and Bibron have done in their genus *Plestiodon*, because they lack the sphenoidal teeth, which is one of its strongest characters; and though the nostril really opens in a single plate, it is not in its middle, but so near its upper part, and the superior margin is so thin that the plate appears almost crescentic.



Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Seineus fasciatus – Linnaeus." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 2, 127–132. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326789>.

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