



Lygosoma lateralis.

LYGOSOMA.—Gray.

Genus LYGOSOMA.—CHARACTERS. Nostrils open in a single plate; anterior frontal plates wanting; palate without teeth, and with a superficial triangular notch near its posterior margin; scales of the body smooth.

LYGOSOMA LATERALIS.—Linnæus.

Plate XIX.

CHARACTERS. Head short; snout rather full; tail very long; body, as well as extremities and tail, above bronze, or at times chestnut coloured; throat silver-white; abdomen yellow; tail beneath, bluish, mottled with grey; a broad, black, lateral band from the head to near the extremity of the tail.

SYNONYMES. *Scincus lateralis*, Say, in Long's Exped. to Rock. Moun., vol. ii. p. 324.

Scincus unicolor, Harlan, Journ. Acad. Nat. Scien., vol. v. p. 156.

Scincus lateralis, Harlan, Med. and Phys. Res., p. 139.

Lygosoma lateralis, Dumeril et Bibron, Hist. Nat. des Rept., tom. v. p. 719.

Ground Lizard, *Vulgo*.

DESCRIPTION. The head is short, and resembles a four-sided pyramid of nearly equal faces, truncated at its apex so as to make the snout rounded. The vertical plate is elongated-pentagonal, terminating in a point behind; there are four superior orbital plates, large, of irregular form, and bordered externally with a series of minute plates; the frontal are irregularly pentagonal, longest transversely,

and touch each other only by an acute angle in front of the vertical plate; the centro-frontal is also irregularly pentagonal, most extensive in the transverse direction, and with its two posterior articulating facets slightly incurvated for the frontal plates; the nasal plate is single and quadrilateral; the rostral is sub-triangular, straight below and rounded above. There are three anterior orbital plates, quadrilateral, the superior largest, and between these and the nasal are two small, irregularly-quadrilateral loreal plates. The occipital plates are five in number, all nearly of the same size; the two anterior are triangular, and reach near to the vertex; the middle one has nearly the same form, and the external are oblong.

The nostrils are small, lateral, and open upwards and outwards in the midst of a single nasal plate; the eyes are small, the pupil is black, and the iris is of dusky-grey and very small.

The tympanum is apparent, the entrance large, with its anterior margin destitute of projecting scales: two or three rows of very wide scales usually follow the occipital plates.

The body is elongated, cylindrical, and nearly of the same size throughout, and is covered, both above and below, with small, smooth, rhomboidal scales, most extensive transversely, imbricated, and disposed in thirty longitudinal rows. The vent is transverse, with large scales in front, and smaller ones behind; of the former, the two central are largest. The tail is round, exceedingly long, stout, and only diminishes in size suddenly near the tip, and is covered with scales similar to those of the body.

The anterior extremities are small and short; the fingers are five in number, each furnished with a minute and curved nail; the posterior extremities are rounded, the toes five in number, each with a nail; the inferior surface of the fingers is serrated, from the projecting points of the scales or tubercles; the soles of the feet are also studded with small tubercles of equal size.

COLOUR. The whole superior surface of the head, body and tail, is a beautiful chestnut; the inferior surface is silver-white at the throat, yellow at the abdomen, and this colour extends for a short distance beyond the vent; the lower surface of the tail is blue, with a tinge of grey. In the female, the yellow of the abdomen is but slight, being little more than white with a yellowish tinge. A remarkable lateral line of jet black begins at the snout, runs through the eye, over the tympanum and shoulder, along the sides of the body and over the posterior extremities to beyond the middle of the tail; below this line the sides of the body are dark grey. The superior surface of the extremities is darker chestnut than the back; the inferior surface is light brown.

DIMENSIONS. Length of head, $4\frac{1}{2}$ lines; length of body to vent, 1 inch 3 lines; of tail, 3 inches 2 lines: total length, $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. The range of the *Lygosoma lateralis* begins certainly in North Carolina, whence I have received specimens; it extends south as far as the Gulf of Mexico, and is continued westward to the Mississippi river. Dr. Blanding has observed this animal at Camden, S. C.; Leconte in Georgia and Florida; Say, on the Missouri, and how much farther west it may exist, cannot now be determined.

HABITS. The *Lygosoma lateralis* may be seen by thousands in the thick forests of oak and hickory in Carolina and Georgia; they emerge from their retreats after sunset, in search of small insects and worms, on which they live; yet their motions are so quick, they appear and disappear so rapidly, that they might at first be mistaken for crickets or other insects. Though so numerous, it is difficult to secure them alive; for when approached, they conceal themselves with astonishing quickness under the roots of old and decaying trees, or beneath fallen leaves, or other vegetable substances; this decaying vegetable matter sometimes forms a stratum several inches thick, containing numerous holes and crevices, to which they can easily retreat, when they are pursued by their enemies.

GENERAL REMARKS. This animal was first described by Say, in Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains.

Though delighting in dark and shady forests, I have never yet observed the *Lygosoma lateralis* to ascend trees, either in search of food, or in its attempts to escape when pursued.

FAMILY. CHALCIDA.

CHARACTERS.

1. The head is rather small, and is covered with polygonal plates.
2. The teeth are not implanted in the maxillary bones, but are applied to their inner surface.
3. The tongue is broad, free, notched in front, covered with squamiform or filiform papillæ, and though slightly extensible, is not retractile in a sheath.
4. The body is generally cylindrical, elongated or serpentiform, and has most commonly a deep groove along the flanks, produced by a fold of the skin.
5. The body and tail are covered with verticillated plates or scales.
6. The extremities are but slightly developed, or are entirely wanting.

Only one genus of this family is found in the United States—*Ophisaurus*.



Holbrook, John Edwards. 1842. "Lygosoma lateralis – Linnaeus." *North American herpetology; or, A description of the reptiles inhabiting the United States* 2, 133–138. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326790>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/24927>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.326790>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/326790>

Holding Institution

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Sponsored by

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.