

Golden-tailed Gecko

Cypress pine © Craig Eddie



Description

The golden-tailed gecko has been described as one of the world's most beautiful geckos. It is white to pale grey, intensely patterned with a network of small black markings over the head, body and limbs, and a bright yellow-orange blaze down the tail. The black markings occur more densely towards the tail. The large eyes are bright orange to red in colour, highlighting the vertically elliptic pupil. The mouth-lining is dark blue. The fingers and toes have broad pads, tipped below with a pair of large plates. This gecko reaches an average total length of about 12 centimetres with a rather long, slender tail.

Distribution

The golden-tailed gecko occurs exclusively in Queensland, with its range virtually confined to the southern half of the Brigalow Belt bioregion. It occurs from the Darling Downs, north to Rockhampton, and north-west to Alpha. Important populations are known to occur at Barakula State Forest and Allies Creek State Forest where the largest tracts of native forest in the southern Brigalow Belt occur.

The distribution of the golden-tailed gecko has contracted due to land clearing for agriculture and grazing.

Habitat

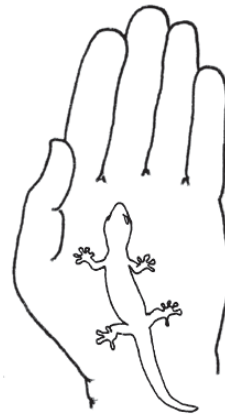
The golden-tailed gecko is found in a wide variety of dry open forests and woodlands on a range of soils e.g. cypress pine, ironbark, eucalypts with flaky or

ribbon-like bark (spotted gum, red gums), bulloak and brigalow/belah. Soils where this species is found can range from sand and sandy loams through to dense clays.

Ecology and Life Cycle

This nocturnal species actively forages by night, hunting insects. By day it shelters in hollow limbs and stumps, under loose bark either on trees or on the ground and occasionally, it can even be found out in the open, clinging to stems, with its netted pattern effectively camouflaging it in the mottled light. There is typically a large amount of fallen woody debris and leaf litter in these vegetation types which this gecko appears to favour.

Females lay two eggs per clutch but show no parental care for eggs or young.



Scientific Name:

Strophurus taenicauda

Conservation Status

Rare - *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Queensland)

The golden-tailed gecko is a very adaptable lizard, being equally at home moving about in the trees and shrubs (arboreal) or on the ground (terrestrial).



Golden-tailed gecko © Craig Eddie

Key Threats

Loss of habitat due to clearing: The golden-tailed gecko has a relatively limited range and land clearing is continuing throughout this region. This causes a concern for its long term survival.

Inappropriate roadside management: Roadsides and road reserves often provide suitable reptile habitat. Populations of reptiles that live within linear remnants, such as roadside strips, are particularly vulnerable to disturbances that remove vegetation and essential microhabitat features, for example, rocks, logs, dense leaf litter and fallen bark.

Inappropriate fire regimes: Fire frequency, intensity, season, type and extent of fires over time, influence biodiversity and ecosystem processes. Inappropriate

fire regimes can potentially alter ecosystem structure and impact on the species habitat requirements i.e. by removing food sources and shelter.

Did you know?

This species belongs to a small group of Australian geckos sharing the unique ability to squirt sticky irritant fluid from pores along the top of the tail when under threat. This fluid has a nasty taste and causes an intense irritation and a burning sensation if it comes in contact with eyes.

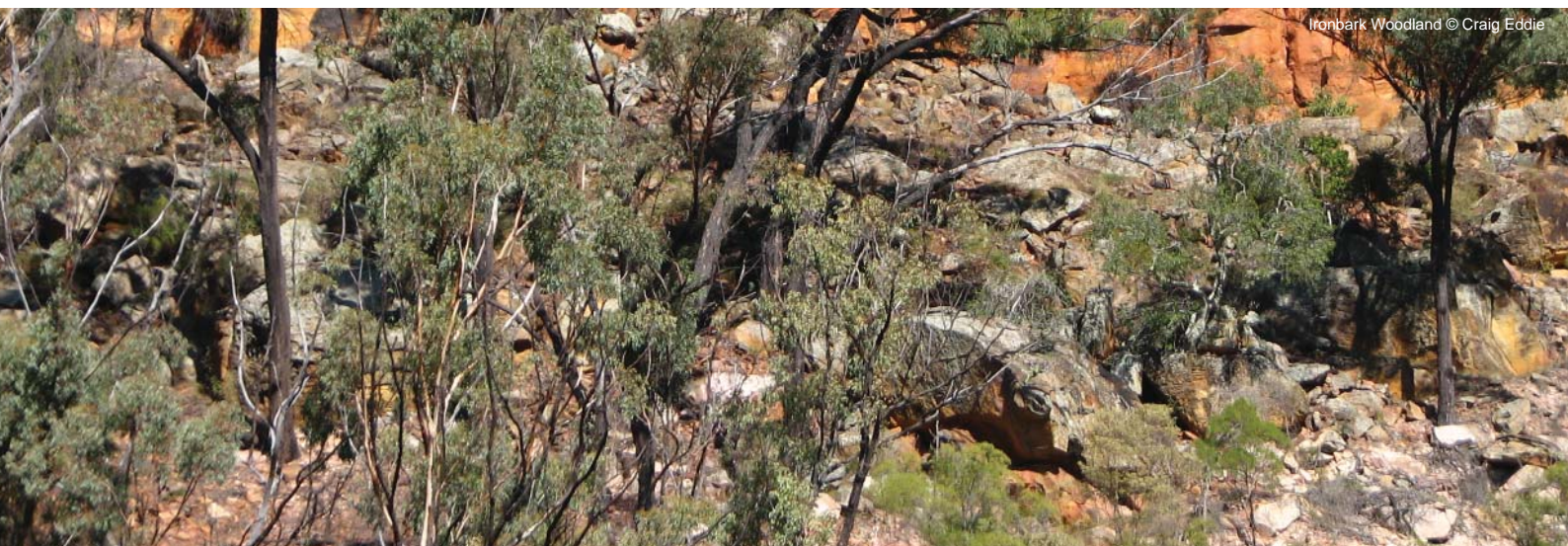
How to help

- Maintain large, healthy, connected patches of native vegetation and avoid ploughing remnant strips/patches of native grassland or woodland.
- Retain mature cypress and brigalow trees, dead standing trees, fallen timber and ground cover as these provide essential habitat for the gecko.
- Ensure grazing practices are sustainable, maintaining greater than 70% ground cover.
- If burning, use cool burns in a mosaic pattern that promote patchiness and leave areas of ground cover unburnt. If possible, leave stick-raked timber piles unburnt.
- Consider entering into a conservation agreement (e.g. Land for Wildlife, Nature Refuges or incentive agreements through grant programs) for conservation and land management assistance.
- Report sightings to WWF-Australia, the Queensland Museum or the EPA/QPWS. Taking a photo of live or dead specimens is useful to help identification.

To find out more about saving threatened species check out www.wwf.org.au/tsn or contact the Threatened Species Network at tsn@wwf.org.au.



The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia



Ironbark Woodland © Craig Eddie