Arid Zone Monitoring
Species Profile

Shingleback, bobtail, sleepy lizard

Tiliqua rugosa

Language names
Pikurta/pikurtu

National status: Not listed

IUCN Red List: Least concern

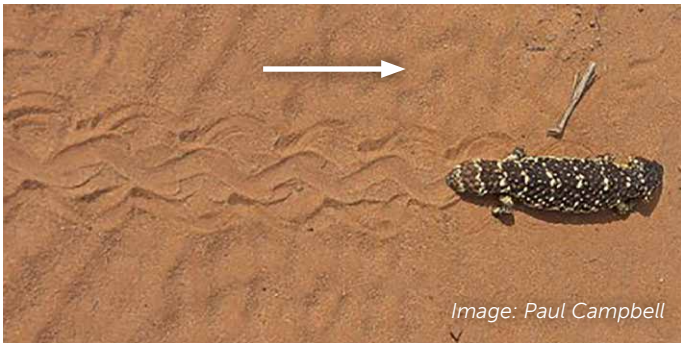
Shingleback.

Animal Description
The shingleback has unmistakable scales, with a triangle-shaped head and tail that make it hard to tell the front from the back end. It is usually dark brown to black with pale bands on the body and tail, and a cream-coloured belly. The shingleback is a close relative to the blue-tongued lizards, and also sticks out its blue tongue when it wants to look scary.

Habitat
The shingleback lives in semi-arid to arid shrublands, desert grasslands and dune fields. They like to shelter in leaf litter and under grass, rocks and logs. In cooler weather shinglebacks enjoy sunbaking.

Threats
No major threats, but preyed on by cats and foxes.

Tracks
Shinglebacks are slow-moving. Their tails leave a zig-zag drag pattern in sand and their legs leave alternating drag marks.

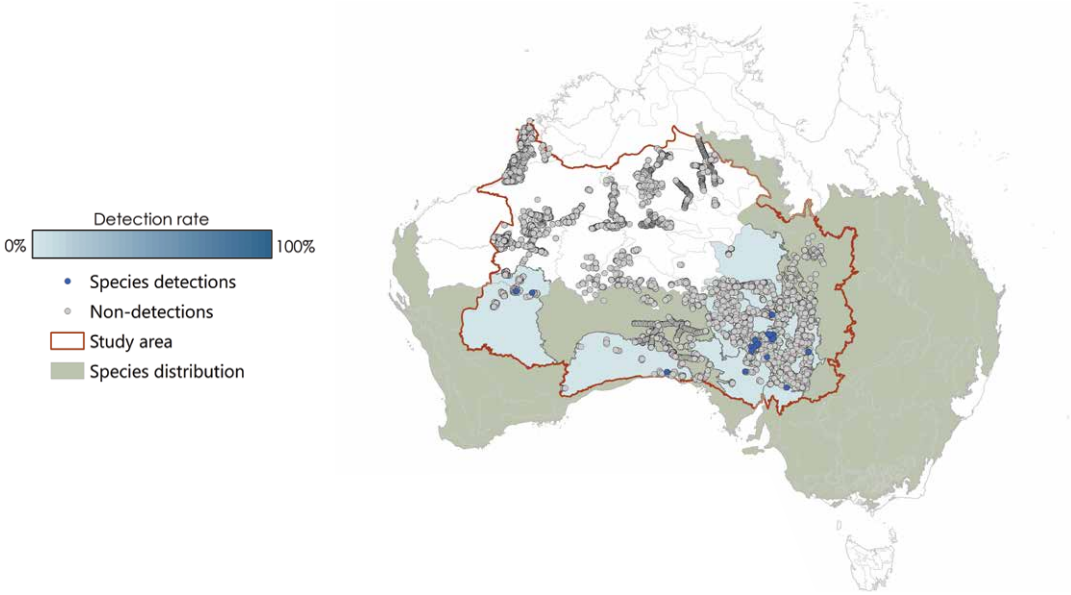


Shingleback and tracks.

Arid Zone Monitoring project findings

Shingleback detection rates

The map shows detections of shinglebacks in the AZM database. They were detected in the south-eastern and western parts of their distribution. Each blue dot shows a survey site where shinglebacks were recorded. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where shinglebacks were not recorded. Shinglebacks were only detected at less than 1% of all surveys in the AZM dataset. These records were made by Indigenous Ranger groups, land councils, NGOs, government agencies and university researchers. The information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from the Australian Faunal Directory[1].



The maps above show data shared by data providers with the AZM project. The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified.

It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, let us know.

Things to think about when surveying for shinglebacks

- Survey during good conditions (in the early morning is best, not too windy or straight after rain).
- Organise to do surveys at regular times every year – for example, before the wet or hot season (October) and in the early dry season or early cool time (April).
- Follow advice of experienced trackers - know how to tell shingleback tracks apart from other small reptiles before you go to survey.
- If you want to see changes over time, you will need to go back to the same areas to sample over several years. If you want to see if management actions (feral animal culling or fire) are working, you need to sample many different sites, before and after the action. You might need help from a scientist to make the sampling design strong.

Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:
https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones

References

[1] ABRS. Australian Faunal Directory. 2021; https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/home. Accessed June, 2021.

Threatened Species Recovery Hub
National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

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