

## WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

The Pygmy Bluetongue (*Tiliqua adelaidensis*) was long thought to be one of Australia's rarest animals. Towards the end of the 20th Century, only 20 specimens had ever been found and no wild populations were known. It was thought to be extinct until the rediscovery of a wild population in 1992.



## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

The Pygmy Bluetongue resembles a miniature version of the larger Bluetongue Lizards. Some distinguishing features are:

- > Pink tongue.
- > Smooth, flat and overlapping scales.
- > Grey-brown to orange-brown with the body pattern lacking obvious stripes across or along the body.
- > Short tail tapering to a point (much shorter than the head and body length).
- > Total body length no more than 20 centimetres.



PHOTOS Julie Schofield, DENR.

## WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Pygmy Bluetongues live in old spider holes, often basking in the entrance of these during the warmer months. However, they are very sensitive to noise and movement and will quickly retreat into their burrow if disturbed.

Pygmy Bluetongues are found in native tussock grasslands made up of grasses such as Spear Grass (*Stipa*), Wallaby Grass (*Danthonia*) and the dark green Iron Grass (*Lomandra*). Iron Grass is a good indicator of native grasslands as it will not re-grow if the land has been ploughed.

Native grasslands in the areas indicated on the map opposite may support Pygmy Bluetongues. These native grasslands are an important ecosystem in the Mid-North, but few patches remain.



## THREATS

Why has the Pygmy Bluetongue almost disappeared? The main threats are:

- > Habitat loss due to:
  - ploughing
  - heavy grazing
  - weed invasion
- > Predation by cats and foxes
- > Insecticides

## CONSERVATION PLAN

A Recovery Team including representatives from the South Australian Museum, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Flinders University, Adelaide Zoo, Threatened Species Network, Nature Foundation SA and the community are working together to:

- > Monitor populations of Pygmy Bluetongues.
- > Collect vital information to aid in the future direction of the management of the species.
- > Raise local awareness of the species, so that it is regarded as a unique and important part of our heritage.
- > Study and document reproductive and captive husbandry requirements with the small colony on display at the Adelaide Zoo.
- > Work with local land managers to minimise threats to lizards on their property.

## DON'T BE CONFUSED! GET TO KNOW YOUR LIZARDS!

Other lizard species, such as the ones pictured below, can be confused with Pygmy Bluetongues.

PHOTOS Mark Hutchinson, Senior Researcher, Herpetology South Australian Museum.



Young of the much larger Eastern Bluetongues (*Tiliqua scincoides*) have cross-bands on the body and tail.



Slender Bluetongues (*Cyclodomorphus venustus*) have smaller heads than Pygmy Bluetongues and characteristic black patches on the neck and above the forelimbs.



NFSA PHOTO

### TILIQUA RESERVE

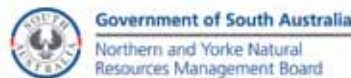
An important step in the protection of the Pygmy Bluetongues was taken in 2010 with the purchase of 80ha of native grassland near Burra by Nature Foundation SA. The reserve is known as 'Tiliqua' in reference to its inhabitants: the largest known colony of Pygmy Bluetongues (*Tiliqua adelaidensis*). In cooperation with the former landholder and Professor Bull of Flinders University, Tiliqua - A Nature Foundation SA Reserve allows vital research into the protection of this species and its requirements for habitat management.



*Tiliqua adelaidensis*

PHOTO Mark Hutchinson, Senior Researcher, Herpetology South Australian Museum.

# PYGMY BLUETONGUE LIZARD



IDENTIFICATION  
AND IMPORTANCE