Great Basin Skink - Plestiodon skiltonianus utahensis

Abundance: Unknown

Status: NSSU NatureServe: G5T5 S1

Population Status: Population numbers and threats unknown. Discovered in 2010 in the Bear River drainage. Only two individuals documented in the state.

Limiting Factor: Habitat: habitat and range restricted in range within the state. Threats unknown.

Comment: Species recently documented in the state (2010).

Introduction

The Great Basin Skink was first documented in Wyoming during the spring of 2010 near Cokeville (Matthews et al. 2011, Snoberger and Walker 2012). Following initial discovery, another Great Basin Skink was documented along the Smith's Fork of the Bear River (Matthews et al. 2011, Snoberger and Walker 2012). Great Basin Skinks are active during the day, but usually stay out of sight under rocks, logs, bark, boards, scrap metal, or burrowed underground (Stebbins 2003, Snoberger and Walker 2012, St. John 2002). This species is likely active from late April through October. Great Basin Skinks feed on insects, spiders, earthworms, and sowbugs (Stebbins 2003, St. John 2002). On average, females lay 2-10 eggs from June to July (Stebbins 2003). Females remain with the nest, and have been known to fend off predators and repair damaged nests (Werner et al. 2004). Eggs typically hatch in late July and August. Skinks can burrow in loose soil, but tend to use existing burrows for nesting and cover (Werner et al. 2004). This species is very cryptic and may easily be overlooked.

Habitat

In Wyoming, the Great Basin Skink has only been documented in Lincoln County (Snoberger and Walker 2012). Great Basin Skinks inhabit areas with rocks or logs in scrub oak, sagebrush, juniper, and grassland habitats from around 4,500 to 8,300 feet (Stebbins 2003, Tanner 1957). They may prefer rocky habitats near streams, but can also be found on hillsides farther from water (Stebbins 2003, Snoberger and Walker 2012a, Snoberger and Walker 2012b).

Problems

- Lack of basic information on the species presence, distribution, and ecology in Wyoming.
- This species has restricted habitats in the state, therefore disturbance to these areas may affect the range of the species in Wyoming.
- Little is known about this species in Wyoming. Lack of information regarding populations, distribution, and habitat associations directly impact the ability to manage for this species.

Conservation Actions

- Research critical life history and habitat information needs
- Survey and monitor population distribution, status, and habitat assocations.

Monitoring/Research

Conduct baseline surveys to gain better understanding of species distribution within the state.

Recent Developments

Baseline reptile and amphibian surveys were conducted in southwest Wyoming in 2009 and 2010 (Snoberger and Walker 2012). Great Basin Skinks were first documented in the state during these surveys (Matthews et al. 2011, Snoberger and Walker 2012). Two Great Basin Skinks were observed and detailed habitat data was collected at these locations (Snoberger and Walker 2012). Reptiles have received increased attention in Wyoming. Incidental observations are encouraged to be reported to the herpetology program.

References

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Werner, J.K., B.A. Maxwell, P. Hendricks, and D.L. Flath. 2004. Amphibians and Reptiles of Montana. Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula. 262pp.

St. John, A. 2002. Reptiles of the Northwest. Lone Pine Publishing. 272 pp.

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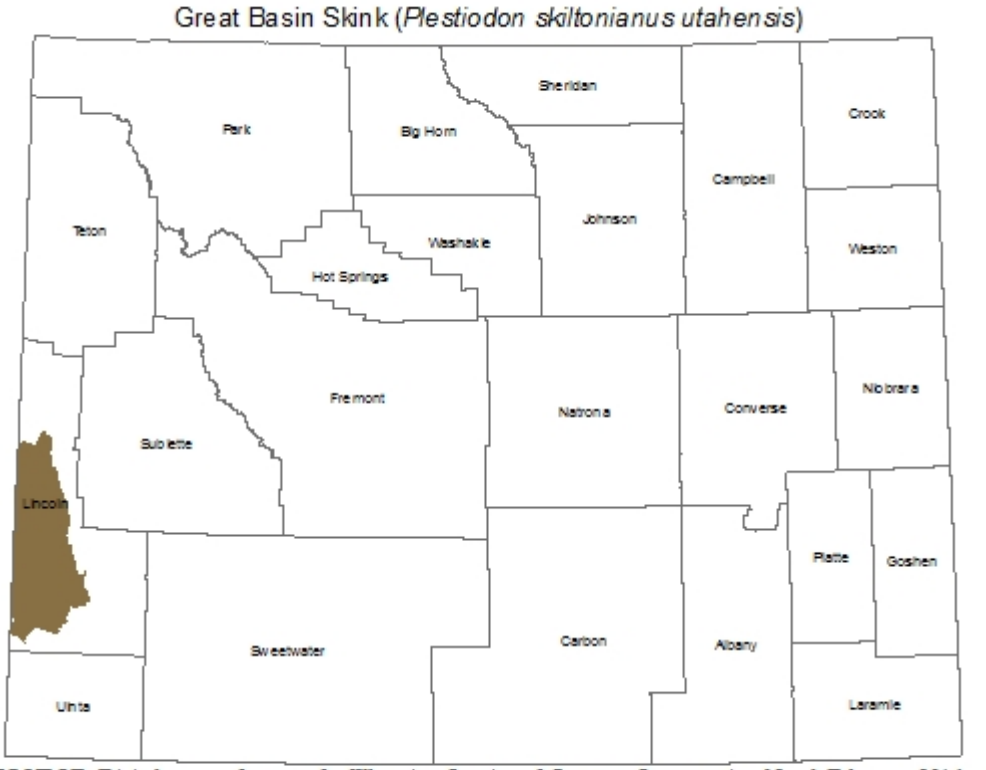
Matthews, C.E., H.J. Vogel, and L.A. Schreiber. 2011. Great Basin Skink (Plestiodon skiltonianus utahensis) geographic distribution. Herpetological Review 42:113.



SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: February 2016. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Note that brown indicates the current known range of the species.