

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

EUROPEAN WALL LIZARDS

(*Podarcis muralis*)

NATIVE RANGE

European Wall Lizards are native to southern Belgium and Germany, south to northern Spain, and east to Turkey. The European Wall Lizards in B.C. are thought to be native to Italy.

DESCRIPTION

European Wall Lizards...

- Have a long, slender, flattened body
- Can grow to be 63 mm in length (snout to base of tail)
- Can have a tail 1.5 times the length of body
- Have small, bead-like scales on back and sides
- Have 6 rows of large rectangular scales on belly region
- Have long fingers and toes
- Do not have skin folds on back and sides of body
- Are variable in colour, ranging from brown to grey to green
- May have black-blue spots on the flank (especially males)
- Adults usually have prominent flecks of green on the back, intensely coloured over the shoulders



Photo: Gavin Hanke

PRIMARY IMPACT:
European Wall Lizards may impact native species through competition and predation.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

European Wall Lizards...

- Can gather in large densities, which can potentially impact native species and ecosystems that are not adapted to their presence
- Could compete for food and shelter with B.C.'s native Northern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria coerulea*) or endangered Sharp-Tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*)

LOOKALIKES

European Wall Lizards can be confused with native Northern Alligator Lizards (*Elgaria coerulea*), which also occur on Vancouver Island. Unlike European Wall Lizards, Northern Alligator Lizards have large plate-like scales on back and bead-like scales on the sides, have skin folds on sides of body, have short fingers and toes, and grow to be 8-10 cm long (snout to tail base). Northern Alligator Lizards are not quite as fast as European Wall Lizards, and are often found under cover. Northern Alligator Lizards are coppery brown to grey, never green.

DID YOU KNOW?

If a European Wall Lizard is captured, it will drop its tail to escape. The tail keeps wiggling for a few minutes in order to distract the predator, giving the lizard a chance to escape. The area where the tail breaks off begins to heal quickly and a new tail will regenerate. The new tail usually shows a different color and scale pattern, is shorter than the original, and can be bent to one side.

EUROPEAN WALL LIZARDS (*Podarcis muralis*)

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

It is thought that European Wall Lizards were first released from a small zoo in west Saanich, B.C. Escaped or intentionally released pets may have also established additional populations. Once introduced, the spread of European Wall Lizards occurs naturally at a rate of 1 km every 10 years (as for some populations in the USA). Their range expansion is assisted by transport on farm-vehicles, hay bales, plant pots etc. European Wall Lizards are successful invaders due to their diet, reproduction and temperature tolerance. They feed on a variety of small invertebrates, but will also eat fruit and berries. They are oviparous (egg-laying), depositing 3-11 eggs once or twice per year depending on summer's duration. In order to avoid cold winter temperatures, European Wall Lizards hibernate below the frost for months at a time. In southwestern B.C., European Wall Lizards are active in winter on sunny days.

HABITAT

In B.C., European Wall Lizards are ground-dwelling, often found on rock faces, open woodlands, and areas of human development (stone and wood piles, concrete and brick walls, railways, roadsides etc.), where there is exposure to the sun. They are fast moving and good climbers, often seen in trees or on sides of buildings.

ARE THEY HERE YET?

Yes. European Wall Lizards can be found in different localities within **Greater Victoria, extending from the Saanich Peninsula, south to Oak Bay, Fairfield, the Hillside Mall area, west to Esquimalt, Langford, Colwood and Metchosin.** There have also been public reports of European Wall Lizards in or near **Mill Bay, Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, Nanaimo and Campbell River on Vancouver Island, along with neighbouring Denman Island and South Pender Island.** On the B.C. mainland there have been two reports of individual European Wall Lizards in **West Vancouver and Osoyoos.**

HOW CAN WE STOP THEM?

- Do not possess, breed, release, sell or transport live European Wall Lizards in B.C.
- Check for stowaways in transported materials
- Raise awareness to avoid the spread of this species into B.C. waters

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

www.reportinvasives.ca

Juvenile European Wall Lizard



Flank of Northern Alligator Lizard



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND ONE?

Report Wall Lizards, or any other invasive species via the **Report Invasives phone app**, or via the **webform** available on the B.C. Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group website:

www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

