

# EUROPEAN WALL LIZARD ALERT



## An arrival from Europe

The European Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) was introduced to Saanich, Vancouver Island, from its native home in Italy in the 1960s. For decades the lizards were restricted to a small area around Brentwood, the point of introduction. Since the 1990s they have spread at an alarming rate, raising concerns about their impacts on native species.

## Distribution in BC

In B.C., European Wall Lizards are known from many localities within Greater Victoria, Saanich Peninsula, and Colwood. They have been reported also from Nanaimo, Mill Bay, and Denman Island.

## How do they spread?

Humans are most likely responsible for spreading European Wall Lizards to new localities. Escaped or intentionally released pets may establish populations, and lizards may be transported inadvertently as stow-aways on farm vehicles, hay bales, or potted plants.



## Why do we care?

European Wall Lizards can reach high densities in suitable open or semi-open habitats, raising concerns about ecological impacts on woodland habitats, especially Garry Oak ecosystems. European Wall Lizards could compete for food or shelter with native Northern Alligator Lizards or endangered Sharp-tailed Snakes. Both European Wall Lizards and Sharp-tailed Snakes are egg-layers, and competition for nest sites is possible (Alligator Lizards bear live young). However, as of 2015, the impact of European Wall Lizards is unknown.

## How can you help?

- Report observations of European Wall Lizards to our website: [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca) (include location & photo if possible)
- Refrain from intentionally moving lizards to new localities.
- Discourage children from catching lizards and keeping them as pets; pets often escape or may be released.
- Inspect horse trailers or materials such as hay bales before transport from sites where European Wall Lizards occur.

## Resources:

**Canadian Herpetological Society.**

[http://www.carcnet.ca/english/reptiles/species\\_accounts/lizards/Podarcis/podarcis2.php](http://www.carcnet.ca/english/reptiles/species_accounts/lizards/Podarcis/podarcis2.php)

**Royal BC Museum. Aliens Among Us.**

<http://alienspecies.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/eng/species/comm-on-wall-lizard>

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Of the three species of lizards native to BC, only one, the Northern Alligator Lizard, occurs on Vancouver Island.

## Northern Alligator Lizard



- Short fingers and toes



- Large plate-like scales on the back; bead-like scales in a row along the sides
- Adults up to 8 – 10 cm in body length (without tail)
- Fold of skin on each side of body
- Dull brown with indistinct dark blotches (juveniles coppery brown)
- Slower moving; usually found on ground
- Often hiding under cover, but may be seen basking near cover, such as on rock walls

Adult with juveniles



## European Wall Lizard

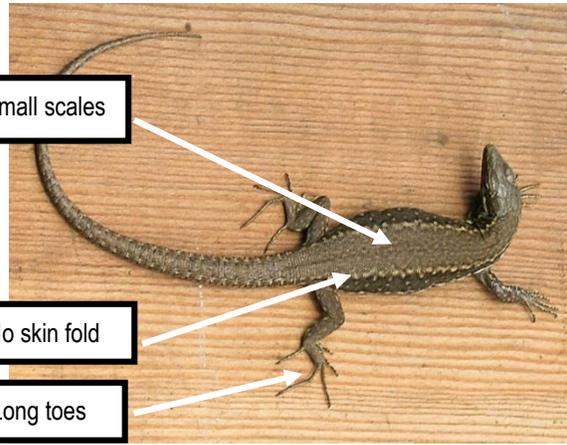


- Long fingers and toes



- Minute bead-like scales across the back and sides
- Adults up to 6.5 cm in body length (without tail)
- No folds on skin
- Prominent black markings on body, sometimes with longitudinal stripes and flecks of green (juveniles coppery brown)
- Fast-moving; good climber; found on the ground or climbing walls or trees
- Frequently basking in the open but also found under cover

Adult



**Production note:** Text by K. Ovaska and C. Engelstoft; photos by C. Engelstoft, G. Hanke (RBCM), and K. Ovaska. Produced by Jill Robinson.