

## *Common Wall Lizard (Podarcis muralis)*

A European lizard is at home in BC.

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The Common Wall Lizard, sometimes known as the European Wall Lizard, is a tiny invader that has settled in British Columbia. Most have been found on southern Vancouver Island, from Sidney south to Victoria and west to Triangle Mountain, but they also have spread to Shawnigan Lake, Mill Bay, Nanaimo, Denman Island and even Campbell River. Individuals have also been spotted in Vancouver and Osoyoos. You usually see Wall Lizards basking in the sun near rocks and other large objects that serve as cover, but you may also catch a glimpse of one scurrying through long grasses or other vegetation.



Common Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*). Photo credit: G. Hanke

### **Impact on Communities and Native Species**

Vancouver Island has a native lizard, the Northern Alligator Lizard, that sometimes shares space with the Common Wall Lizard. The two species co-exist in a few places, though the Common Wall Lizard always is more abundant. We don't yet know what the Common Wall Lizard eats, but it is likely that their prey is similar to that of the Northern Alligator Lizard. The only real difference in habitat preference is that Wall Lizards seem to occupy disturbed habitat near humans, while Alligator Lizards prefer undisturbed natural environments.

### **Invasion History**

The Common Wall Lizard is European in origin, but it was introduced to Vancouver Island around 1970 when a handful of lizards were released from a small private zoo when it closed. Since then, these lizards have spread on their own and with human help. Lizards can move by catching a ride on farm equipment, horse trailers or in shipments of hay and piles of firewood. Lizard eggs can be moved in potted plants. People also intentionally move lizards to start their own garden populations.

## Identifying Characteristics

- up to 21 cm long (nose to tip of tail)
- females are grey-brown with light green speckle pattern
- males can have similar colours to females, or have bold black and green spots across the back
- young are coppery gold
- scales on the back and sides are hard to see without close inspection or magnifying glass
- belly scales are much larger and almost rectangular in shape