

# INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

## COMMON/EUROPEAN WALL LIZARD

(*Podarcis muralis*)

### HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

#### DESCRIPTION

- Long, slender, flattened body with long fingers and toes.
- Grow to 6.3 cm in length (snout to base of tail).
- Long tails, up to 1.5 times the body length.
- Do not have skin folds on back and sides of body.
- Variable in colour, ranging from brown to grey to green.
- May have black-blue spots on the flank (especially males) and may have prominent flecks of green on the back, which may be more intense near the shoulders.



Photo credit: Gavin Hanke

**REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES**

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[www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

#### PRIMARY THREAT:

*Common Wall Lizards gather in large densities resulting in intense competition for food and living space for B.C.'s native Northern Alligator Lizard (Elgaria coerulea) and the endangered Sharp-Tailed Snake (Contia tenuis).*



Photo credit: Gavin Hanke

#### SPREAD

Common 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 Common Wall Lizards may occur at a rate of 1 km every 10 years (as has been observed for some populations in the USA). Their range expansion is assisted by transport on farm vehicles, hay bales, plant pots, etc. Common 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, Common Wall Lizards hibernate below the frost for months at a time. In southwestern B.C., Common Wall Lizards are active in winter on sunny days.

In B.C., Common 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 sun exposure is abundant. They are fast moving and good climbers, often seen in trees or on sides of buildings.

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



# COMMON WALL LIZARD (*Podarcis muralis*)

## DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Common Wall Lizards originated in Europe; those found in B.C. are thought to be native to Italy. Common Wall Lizards can be found within Greater Victoria, extending throughout the Saanich Peninsula, south to Oak Bay, Fairfield, the Hillside Mall area, west to Esquimalt, Langford, Colwood, Metchosin and Sooke. There have also been reports of Common Wall Lizards in or near Mill Bay, Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, Duncan, Crofton, Nanaimo, Sproat Lake, Ucluelet, Comox, Union Bay, and Campbell River on Vancouver Island, along with neighbouring Denman Island, Saltspring Island and a single record each on Hand Island and North Pender Island. On the B.C. mainland there is a population known in the Powell River area, Delta and in the Vedder Crossing area near Chilliwack. There have been reports of individual Common Wall Lizards in West Vancouver and Osoyoos. The lizard in Osoyoos was a stowaway from Vancouver Island and was captured.

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## LOOK-ALIKES:

Common Wall Lizards can be confused with native Northern Alligator Lizards, which also occur on Vancouver Island. Unlike Common 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 Common Wall Lizards and are often found under cover. Northern Alligator Lizards also are coppery brown to grey, never

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

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

## DID YOU KNOW?

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



Flank of Northern Alligator Lizard

Photo credit: Gavin Hanke

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