

EUROLIZARDS

Iberolacerta monticola - West Iberian Rock Lizard



Subsp. monticola, Male: P / Serra da Estrela, 17.07.2013 - Note the green colouration with black reticulation on backs and flanks.

The genus *Iberolacerta* is some kind of antagonist of the genus *Podarcis*: During postglacial warming periods numerous *Podarcis* species were able to significantly expand their ranges, whereas the more heat-sensitive *Iberolacerta* species have been pushed to some cooler mountain refugia. Current climate warming seems to amplify this development, as species like *Podarcis muralis* increasingly invade high-altitude *Iberolacerta* habitats. However, this may not be the end of the story: In case of possible future climate cooling the tide could turn.

Actually, the current restriction of *Iberolacerta* to several isolated refugia has led to remarkable species differentiation on the Iberian Peninsula with *Iberolacerta monticola* covering the largest range.

As the common name of the West Iberian Rock Lizard may indicate, this species occurs in the following areas:

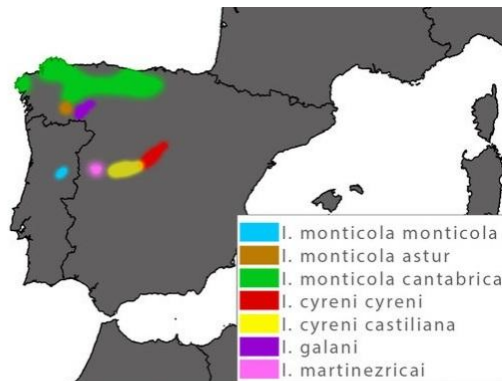
- The *nominate subspecies* lives in the high altitudes of Serra da Estrela in Portugal.
- *Subspecies astur*, which has been described in 2014, only occurs in a small mountain area south of Villablino / Province León - an area with rather continental climate, compared to the Cantabrian area with moderate Atlantic climate.
- *Subsp. cantabrica* covers the Cantabrian Mountain Range and some lowland areas in Galicia.

It occurs in granite rock areas up to 2000 meters. In suitable habitats, it may occur in high numbers and can be quite approachable.

Males show bright greenish (or cyan) colours with distinct dark markings and can hardly be confused with other species. *Lacerta schreiberi* may look similar at the first glance but they are bigger with deeper heads and shorter snouts.

Females of *Iberolacerta monticola* are rather brownish and may be confused with *Podarcis* species (*Podarcis muralis*, *Podarcis bocagei* and *Podarcis guadarramae*). The latter ones frequently show clearly defined light dorsolateral lines which lack in *Iberolacerta monticola*. Another characteristic of *Iberolacerta* are the alternately broad and narrow tail segments. At *Podarcis*, all tail segments have the same size. (Admittedly, a very close look may be required to recognize these differences.)

Juvenile *Iberolacerta monticola* can be distinguished from juvenile *Podarcis muralis* by their blue or green tails (However, juvenile *Podarcis bocagei* or *Podarcis guadarramae* also may have blue tails). Hence, the identification of single females or juveniles may be tricky.



Distribution areas of the Iberian *Iberolacerta* species: *Iberolacerta monticola*, *Iberolacerta galani* and *Iberolacerta martinezricai* are very similar and may best be distinguished by range.



Subsp. monticola, male: P / Serra da Estrela, 15.07.2013 - Occasionally, males may show cyan instead of green colours.



Subsp. astur, male: E / Villablino, 20.09.2017 - Males of this subspecies may show extensive black reticulation.



Subsp. astur, female: E / Villablino, 20.09.2017 - Females of this species may resemble to Podarcis species.



Subsp. astur, juvenile: E / Villablino, 20.09.2017 - Note the green tail.



Subsp. cantabrica, male: E / Picos de Europa, 12.09.2011 - Males of this subspecies frequently show brownish / greyish backs.



Subsp. cantabrica, male: E / O Pindo (A Coruña) , 06.09.2011 - In Galicia, this species occurs in lower altitudes: This specimen was photographed at 400 m ost.



Scenic mountain area in the Picos de Europa (E / Asturias) - Habitat of *Iberolacerta monticola*, *Podarcis muralis* and *Zootoca vivipara*.


EUROLIZARDS

[About](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookie Policy](#) | [Sitemap](#)

EUROLIZARDS - The Home of European Lizards! © Birgit & Peter Oefinger