Podarcis wagleriana Gistel, 1868

Sicilian Wall Lizard · (Italian name: lucertola siciliana)

Relatively big and slender, deep head. Granular dorsal scales very slightly keeled. Light and continuous supraciliar stripes. Occipital stripe in general formed by a set of black spots that can be reduced or absent in the anterior part. Normally the background color is green, but also brownish or olive green mainly in females. Individuals without dorsal design (*concolor*) can be also found. Ventral part whitish, or even often reddish in males. Total length in adult males up to 25 cm. SVL up to 7.5 cm. Females are generally smaller. Easily to be confused with *Podarcis sicula*, from which *P. wagleriana* can be distinguished by the continuous and well-defined light dorso-lateral stripes. No reticulation occurs in this species. Also dark spots can be present on the throat. Very difficult to distinguish between the two species where hybrids occur. In general *P. sicula* is frequently seen close to human settlements.

Distribution, zoogeography and taxonomy: Sicily, but lacking in the northeastern part of the island (Peloritani Mounts and on the coastal areas below) and above 1600 m. Even at lower elevation *P. wagleriana* was not found on Mount Etna (Turrisi & and Vaccaro, 2001). The species occurs on the following circum-Sicilian islands: Favignana, Levanzo, Marettimo, Isola Grande dello Stagnone, Mozia, S. Maria La Scuola (Corti et al., 1998; Lo Valvo & Massa, 1999). The occurrence on Maraone Islet, quoted by Lo Valvo (1998), could deserve confirmation.

The species is relatively well-distributed on the island, but most-prevailing in densely covered flat lands, close to deciduous forests, but also found in gardens, pastures, garrigues and cultivated areas. On Marettimo Island (Egadian Archipelago) the lizard is found on Mediterranean maquis while *P. sicula* close to human settlements. On the Isola Grande dello Stagnone, *P. wagleriana* live in habitats characterized by halophilous vegetation.

The northeastern part of the island where *P. wagleriana* is not found has a different geological origin, belonging to the extreme part of the Calabrian Arc. The present position was reached after a gradual withdrawal in the Tyrrhenian region. If the geological history of this region is related with the absence of the Sicilian Wall Lizard, is not

Fig. 82: *Podarcis wagleriana,* Zingaro Nature Reserve, Trapani, Sicily. R. Sindaco

yet known, but this coincidence deserves further investigation. Capula et al. (2001) observed that the Egadian population is morphologically less variable than those inhabiting Sicily, probably due to bottleneck effect.

Klemmer (1956) ascribed the Marettimo population to the subspecies *marettimensis*. The subsp. *catanensis* (Taddei, 1949b), described on specimens of Catania and Siracusa was erroneously ascribed to *Podarcis sicula*, but later to the nominal form.

Biology and ecology: Sorci (1989) observed micro-habitat-use-differences between *P. sicula* that seem to bask mainly on walls and rocks (in 90 % observations), and *P. wagleriana* exclusively terricole (in 100 % observations). In the Zingaro Natural Reserve, the Sicilian Wall Lizard is often seen on stones on the ground, but rarely on other substrates such as wood (R. Sinsaco, pers. obs).

The Sicilian Wall Lizard feeds mainly on Araneae (15.9 %), Formicidae (15.9 %), Blattidae (12.7 %), Coleoptera (11.1 %) and larvae of arthropods (11.1 %) (Sorci 1990), showing to be less generalist than *P. sicula*.

Fig. 83: *Podarcis wagleriana,* Zingaro Nature Reserve, Trapani, Sicily. R. SINDACO

Annual activity can be influenced by weather conditions. During warm and sunny winter days, the lizards can be observed basking. Mating takes place in April/May, but can occur also in summer. Clutch size 2–6 whitish eggs of 11–13 x 7–8 mm. The presence of juveniles in the early spring is due to late depositions (SORCI, 1989).