

*Timon lepidus* (DAUDIN, 1802)

Ocellated Lizard · (Italian name: lucertola ocellata)

Very large lizard, relatively flattened, head big and robust. Dorsal scales are smooth or slightly keeled. Dorsal coloration from yellow-greenish, to bright green and even grey-brownish with dark and pronounced scattered spots. Blue ocelli are often present on the flanks, sometimes black edged. Tail generally green, becoming darker at the end. In juveniles, the ocelli are white, black edged and distributed on the back and on the flanks. Ventral part white-yellowish, throat is sometimes green. Total length in adult males in general up to 60 cm. SVL up to 20 cm or even more. Particularly large individuals have been observed with a total length of 80–90 cm. Females generally are smaller.

Adults easy distinguishable from other lizards because of size. Juveniles can be distinguished from *L. bilineata* because of the scales that are less keeled and by the different dorsal pattern.

**Distribution, zoogeography and taxonomy:** Iberian Peninsula (except on Cantabric coast and some adjacent montane areas) and on the following islands Berlenga, Sálvora, Ons, San MARTÍN, Monteagudo, Faro, Cortegada, Arosa, Toja Grande, Palomas and Olla; southern France, and in some isolated localities on the Atlantic coast, on the islands of Oléron and Porquerolles (the population of the Ratonneau Island in the Gulf of Marseille, seem to be extinct); northwestern Italy, only in western and central Liguria.

Besides the nominal form, to which the Italian populations are referred, the following subspecies are known: *nevadensis* BUCHHOLZ, 1963, arid regions of southeastern Iberian Peninsula; and ssp. *iberica* (LÓPEZ SEOANE, 1884) of the coastal regions of northwestern Portugal.

This lizard occurs in a great variety of habitats: cultivated areas, arid and sunny rocky sites, sandy and shrubby areas, garrigues; open maquis of *Quercus coccifera*, *Quercus ilex*, *Erica* sp. CASTILLA & BAUWENS (1992) observed in a Mediterranean maquis (Navas del Rey, Central Spain) the preference for both high (above 2 m) and low covered rocky and sandy areas where a rapid thermoregulation is assured; while it

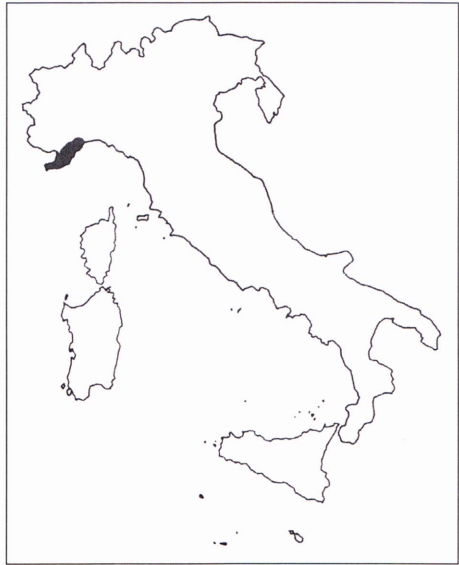




Fig. 89: *Timon lepidus*, Savona province, Liguria.

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Fig. 90: *Timon lepidus*, Côte d'Azur, France.

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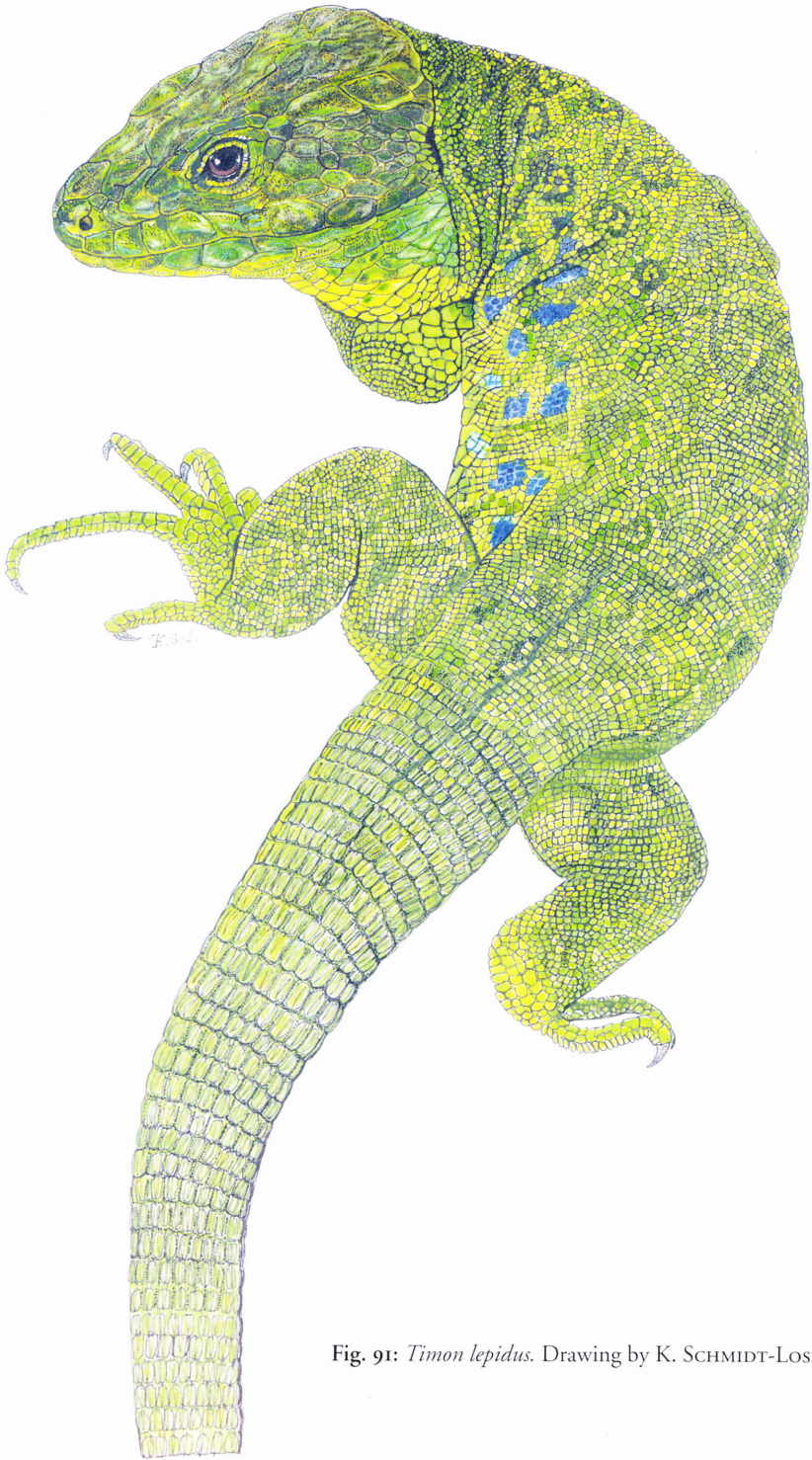


Fig. 91: *Timon lepidus*. Drawing by K. SCHMIDT-LOSKE

seems to avoid pastures. *T. lepidus* is found up to 2000 m elevation (Sierra Nevada, Spain); on the Pyrenees up to 1300 m, while in Provence up to 1350 m, even if this lizard is mainly found at lower elevation. In Liguria, *T. lepidus* has been recorded only up to 500 m.

**Biology and ecology:** Mainly terricolous, but also observed on rocks and trees. Very shy and therefore not easily detected. Rarely approachable at a distance of less than 20–30 m. Escape behavior differs among continental and insular populations. On Berlenga Island (Portugal), the lizard can be approached at a distance of 10 m. This is probably due to the high population density (24–30 individuals/ha) and to the scarce territoriality shown by the males of this population (PAULO, 1988; VICENTE, 1989). On Cíes Islands (NW Spain), gregarious behavior and population densities of 18–208 ind/ha have been observed by GALÁN (2000). On the continent, the population density varies between 12 and 50 ind/ha (ALLEN, 1977; CASTILLA, 1989). Home range varies between 100 and 900 m<sup>2</sup> (CASTILLA, 1989), while SEVA (1982) estimated more than 2 ha for a coastal dune habitat near Alicante (eastern Spain).

CASTILLA et al. (1991), studying the feeding behavior of *T. lepidus* of central Spain, observed Coleoptera (74 %) as prevailing prey and in smaller quantity Hymenoptera (8 %) and Orthoptera (4 %). The diet shows to be highly variable even if many prey categories are scarcely represented. *T. lepidus* also feeds on reptiles, birds, Insectivora and rodents. Necrophagia and oophagia have also been observed (PLEGUEZUELOS et al., 1999b). Vegetables are also consumed, particularly by the adults, and are represented mainly by gramineous seeds and stem parts, oak leaves, grapes, flowers and fruits of Asteraceae, Leguminosae and other plants (CASTILLA et al., 1991). HÓDAR et al. (1996) observed that at the end of the summer, the diet is mainly based on fruits, with the consumption of large quantities of those of *Capparis spinosa*, when the usual prey-availability decreases. ESCARRÉ & VERICAD (1981) observed for coastal Spain (Alicante) that vegetable matter represents the 10 % of the diet, while Coleoptera seem to be the prevailing prey (47.6 %), followed by Gastropoda (14.5 %) and Hymenoptera (10.8 %). Also, VALVERDE (1967), in the region of Almería, observed that Coleoptera is the main prey (85.2 %) and vegetable matter (12.2 %) is also consumed.

This lizard is active from March to October (in France and central Spain) (CHEYLAN, 1984; Pérez-Mellado, 1982), or from February to November (in southern Spain) (BUSACK & Visnaw, 1989), or even throughout the year (in southeastern Spain) (CASTILLA & BAUWENS, 1989). Diurnal, with uni- or bi-modal activity pattern depending on climate and locality, partial activity during night was also observed (FRANCO et al., 1980; HÓDAR et al., 1996). Mating season May–July, but even in March when allowed by the weather conditions. Eggs 5–24 of 19 x 13 mm when just laid, after deposition egg size increases probably due to absorption of water (CASTILLA & BAUWENS, 1989).