

EVOLUTIONARY ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF A SEXUALLY SELECTED PHENOTYPE

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Evolutionary biologists aim to understand how novel characters arise and why they spread through populations. Here I will review our ongoing research on the evolution of a striking suite of exaggerated traits – morphology, coloration and behaviour – in common wall lizards (*Podarcis muralis*). Genomic analyses reveal that the suite of traits, traditionally associated with the ‘*nigriventris*’ phenotype, originated recently close to modern Rome. The phenotype has since spread and eventually introgressed into a distantly related lineage in western Italy. I will explain why the traits are favoured, what limits their spread, and how this creates a mosaic of phenotypic and genetic variation of the species in Italy.