

Lacerta viridis (LAURENTI, 1768)
Eastern green lizard (Lacertidae)

Whereas the large *L. trilineata* is very common on Corfu, *L. viridis* is more difficult to find and if you count randomly observed larger green lizards it only accounts for about 2% and in contrast to *L. trilineata* you very rarely, if ever, find it killed or even seen on the roads. The reason for this is that *L. viridis* is more restricted with respect to habitat, which makes it local and far less common. In general, reports from central and south Corfu are probably based on misidentified *L. trilineata* and *P. tauricus*. The old sighting from Lazaretto is most likely to have been of *P. tauricus*, a common and variable species on this very small islet. The single specimen reported from southern Paxos seems to be correctly identified, but there are no recent reports of this species and despite three visits to the area we have not been able to find it, and according to locals there are no green lizards on the island. There are a few potential areas in the south of Corfu that need to be further investigated to find out if the lizard is present.

L. viridis is a slender, long tailed and very elegant lizard intermediate in size to the two other green lizards in the area, with a total size around 35 cm for adults and 8–9 cm for newly hatched juveniles. The tail is very long, making up 75% of the total length as compared to 65% in e.g. *L. trilineata*, and its body mass is only about 60% of a *L. trilineata*



Fig. 225: Male *Lacerta viridis* with distinct blue chin, cheek and throat with no yellow shades and no dark vermiculate markings on the head typical of this species.



Fig. 226: *Lacerta viridis* is a slender and elegant lizard and a good climber usually seen resting in the vegetation rather than on the ground.



Fig. 227: Subadult *Lacerta viridis* could be mistaken for a green morph of *Podarcis tauricus* but these species differ in head scalation, habitat and behaviour.



Fig. 228: Juvenile *Lacerta viridis* with only two faint lateral (dotted) and dorsal lines. In some specimens the lines are lost and the back marked with diffuse slightly darker irregular spots.

of comparable size. It has a uniform and deep green colour with little or no yellow, no dark vermiculate markings on the head scales and in males, and sometimes old females, the cheeks are distinctly blue. It has relatively long legs and is a good climber and can be seen resting in bushes and on top of brackens and other plants. Juveniles are light brown or olive coloured and normally have two rows of pale stripes on the back and one dotted line on each side, but both these markings can be very subtle or even missing.

We have observed adults from April–July and September–October and juveniles from March–April and October–November and looking for basking and foraging juveniles in late autumn may be one of the best ways of finding the species. Adult *L. viridis* are most easily observed during the mating season in April and May when the heads of the males turn brilliantly blue. In contrast to *L. trilineata*, which can be frequently observed in a variety of habitats, the Eastern green lizard, which can locally be quite common, is harder to find since it is more or less confined to habitats with good access to water and lush vegetation such as stream banks and herbaceous meadows.

The species mainly feeds on invertebrates from insects to slugs but also eats fruit, and it is possible that larger specimens can catch small lizards. Juveniles may hatch already in August–September, but we have mainly found them later, especially in November. Females lay up to 20 eggs that hatch after 2–3 months.



Fig. 229: Female *Lacerta viridis*.

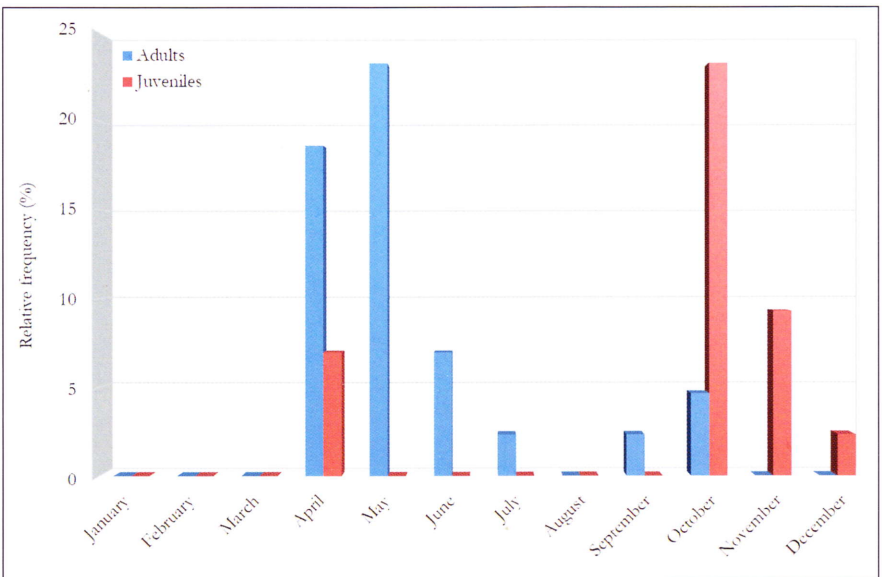
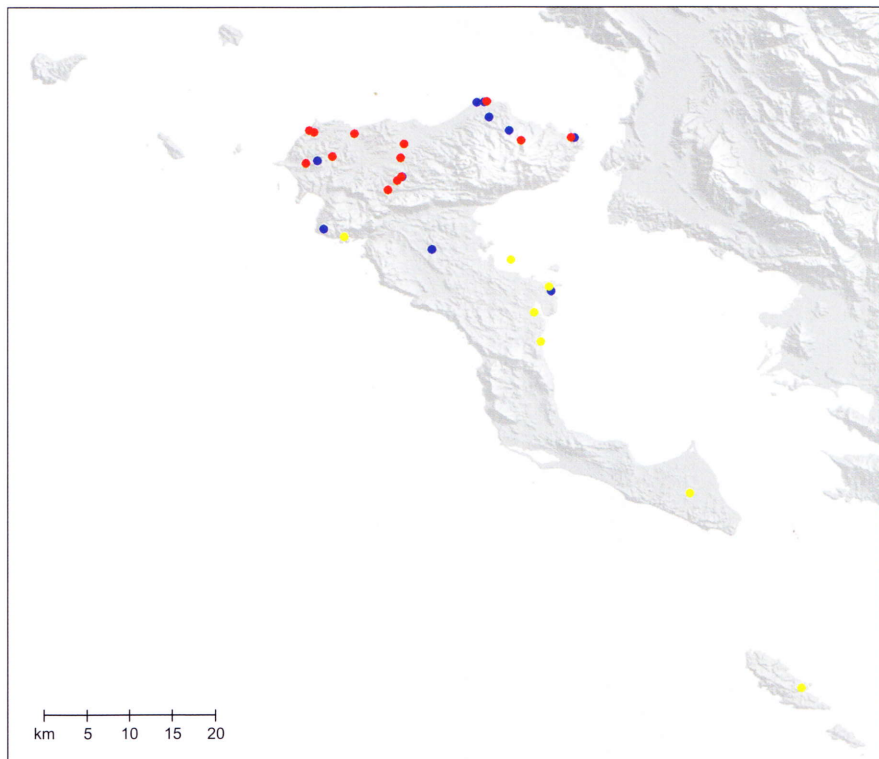


Fig. 230: Relative monthly observation frequency (%) for *Lacerta viridis* (n = 43).



Map 24: Localities for *Lacerta viridis*.

The question as to the presence of one or two large green lacertid species on Corfu was under debate for quite some time until it was demonstrated that both *L. trilineata* and *L. viridis* inhabit the island. However, recent studies indicate that the latter may actually represent the Western green lizards (*Lacerta bilineata* DAUDIN, 1802) as this appears to be the species found in Epirus on the nearby Greek mainland and probably also further north along the entire Adriatic coast. These species are very similar and the systematics of *L. viridis* complex needs to be further investigated. Specimens of *L. viridis* from Corfu are quite different from those from for instance the Pindos area, with a more slender head and body, a longer tail (75% of TL) and a more uniform green adult colour with no markings. The subspecies on Corfu has been referred to as *L. v. meridionalis* CYRÉN, 1933, but this is most likely incorrect and for the time being, awaiting further studies, we will refer to the population on Corfu as *L. viridis*.