Podarcis muralis - Common Wall Lizard

Subsp. muralis, female RO / Orsola, 30.05.2013 - This species frequently shows a characteristic dark brown stripe on flanks that continues from the ear openings to the eyes.

The Common Wall Lizard is really a heck of a lizard: highly opportunistic, invasive, with short reproduction circles - with these qualities, it was able to spread from its Italian origin and populate a huge area from north-western Spain to the Black Sea coast.

Actually, these highly adaptive lizards aren’t reliant on ‘walls’ or rocks as the common name may imply. Instead, they inhabit a wide range of habitats from coastal plains to high altitude mountain areas and even established strong populations in human settlements and big cities. Yet, they could be somehow regarded as a synanthropic species.

Numerous introduced populations do exist outside of the natural range - in Europe and even in North America. People might think that such a ‘common’ lizard is boring - but we should keep in mind that these animals are state-of-the-art reptiles!

The nominate subspecies occurs on the Italian Peninsula from eastern Austria to Turkey. It’s a brownish, robust Wall Lizard which frequently shows a dark brown stripe on the flanks which continues from the ear opening to the eyes. The underside is white or reddish and the throat is reddish or red- and black-dotted.

The nominate subspecies may be confused with other Podarcis species of the area (Podarcis melisellensis, Podarcis siculus, Podarcis taenius, Podarcis lilium, Podarcis erhardi) and Podarcis peloponnesicaus), but also with Eremias argus and Zootoca vivipara (see pages of these species for differentiation).

The approximate distribution area of Podarcis muralis introduced populations, mainly in Central Europe, are not mapped.
Subsp. brongniardi, male. Penyagolosa, 30.08.2015 - with its brownish flank stripes and the reddish/orange underside, this subspecies looks similar to the nominate subspecies. Note the blue outer ventral scales.

Subsp. brongniardi occurs from north-western Spain to western Germany. It looks very similar to the nominate subspecies frequently showing the characteristic dark brown stripe on the flanks.

It may be confused with Iberian Podarcis species, in particular Podarcis lilaspis and Podarcis barbarus, although Spanish Podarcis are generally smaller and more delicately built. Furthermore, confusion with Zootoca vivipara and even Iberolacerta species (Iberolacerta bonnetii, Iberolacerta aurelioi, Iberolacerta aranica, Iberolacerta monticola, Iberolacerta cyreni) is possible. See pages of those species for differentiation.

Subsp. brongniardi, female. Penyagolosa (Castellón), 30.08.2015.
Subsp. bronigiardi, black morph D / Kaisersulz (Baden-Württemberg). 19.05.2017 - In general, melanistic specimens may occur in all Lacertid species. In some populations of Podarcis muralis, such black morphs frequently occur.

Subsp. nigriventris, male I / Rome, 16.05.2019 - This subspecies shows dark colours with white and greenish dots.

Subsp. nigriventris occurs in central Italy. It shows dark colourations and a distinct black underside with green colours on the back (see also the female in the header picture). It may hardly be confused with Podarcis siculus which shows much lighter colours.
Subsp. maculiventris occurs in northern Italy. Males of this subspecies show black spots on the underside, which lack in the nominate subspecies. It may be confused with Zootoca vivipara or Podarcis siculus (see pages of those species for differentiation).

Subsp. colossi on Elba (Italy) may look similar but it is highly variable in pattern and sometimes even resembles to Podarcis siculus. Another subspecies - Podarcis muralis breviceps - occurs in southern Italy which seems to be restricted to mountain areas of Calabria and Gargano. This poorly known morph looks similar to subsp. maculiventris or even the nominate subspecies.