



Podarcis filfolensis - Maltese Wall Lizard



Subsp. laurentiimuelleri, male; I / Linosa, 15.06.2018 - The nominate subspecies from Filfolia Rock south of Malta looks similar.

The Maltese Wall Lizard is maybe one of the most underrated Lacertids in Europe: One might think that it's just another Wall Lizard species - but it's a jewel! Highly variable in pattern, it can show bright yellow and green colours, and the black morphs with blue spots from Filfolia Rock (and Linosa Island) are real stunners.

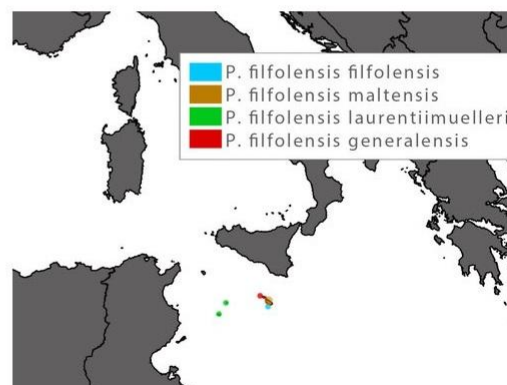
Podarcis filfolensis can be found on Malta and Gozo (plus adjoining islets) and the Pelagic Islands of Linosa and Lampione. These lizards are highly adaptable and can live on bare volcanic rocks as well as in the city gardens of Valletta (Malta). On the Pelagic Islands, they occur in high densities. There, the chance of exploring new food resources makes them curious and fearless.

Although it is quite variable pattern and colour, *Podarcis filfolensis* cannot be confused with other species as it is the only Lacertid lizard in its range.

Currently, four subspecies are recognized:

- The *nominate subspecies* occurs on Filfolia islet south of Malta only.
- *Subsp. generalensis* occurs on a rock off western Gozo.
- The populations of Linosa and Lampione are referred to *subsp. laurentiimuelleri*.
- On Malta and Gozo *subsp. maltensis* occurs.

Anyhow, genetic analysis has put this subspecies taxonomy into question. There seem to be two genetic lineages: Malta on the one hand and the other populations on the other hand.



The distribution of *Podarcis filfolensis* is limited to some southern Mediterranean islands.



Subsp. laurentiimuelleri, male: I / Linosa, 15.06.2018 - The population of Linosa shows very dark colours.



Subspecies maltensis, male: M / Valletta, 03.04.2015 - On Malta, this species often shows pretty green and orange colours.



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Subspecies *maltensis*, male: M / Gozo, 04.04.2015 - Specimen from Gozo are highly variable, often showing a heavy black reticulation.



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Subspecies *maltensis*, male: M / Gozo, 04.04.2015 - subspecies *generalensis* from 'General's Rock' off western Gozo shows a similar strong black reticulation.



Coastal habitat of *Podarcis filfolensis* on Linosa (Italy): The Apiaceae flowers in front are visited by the lizards to lick their pollen and hunt for insects.

* RODRIGUEZ, V. & BROWN, R.P. & TERRASA, B. & PEREZ-MELLADO, V. & PICORNELL, A. & CASTRO, J.A. & RAMON, C. (2013) - Genetic diversity and historical biogeography of the Maltese wall lizard, *Podarcis filfolensis* (Squamata: Lacertidae). - *Conservation Genetics*. 15 (2): 295-304.

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