

First record of *Podarcis muralis* (LAURENTI, 1768), from Athens, Greece

The Common Wall Lizard, *Podarcis muralis* (LAURENTI, 1768), has the widest range among the representatives of the genus (GUILLAUME 1997). Its natural distribution covers a large part of central and southern Europe (GRUSCHWITZ & BÖHME 1986) while it was introduced to North America (BÖHME et al. 2009). In Greece, *P. muralis* is widespread throughout the mainland (CHONDROPOULOS 1986) where it typically occurs at medium and high altitudes, and avoids lowlands and coasts. The species is, however found on only three Greek islands, Samothrace (WERNER 1938), Euboea (VALAKOS et al. 2008) and Corfu (HILL & MAYER 2004). In south Greece its distribution is confined to mountains, where its presence is bound to high humidity and lush vegetation (VALAKOS et al. 2008).

On May 7, 2016, the authors observed a basking individual of *P. muralis* on a wall of a sidewalk in the west Athenian suburb Agioi Anargyroi (38°01'00.53"N, 23°43'10.84"E; 60 m a.s.l.). During the subsequent survey, 13 individuals of this species were encountered two of which, a male [snout to vent length (SVL) 52 mm, regenerated tail, mass 3.2 g] and a female (SVL 49 mm, tail length 98 mm, mass 2.9 g) (Fig. 1) were captured. Both specimens were added to the Herpetological Collection of the Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete (Museum voucher numbers NHMC 80.3.55.145 and 80.3.55.146). The individuals were collected under the permit ΑΔΑ:73ΟΣ4653Π8-7Ψ8 that was issued by the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy. The species has never been reported from the metropolitan area of Athens in the past. It may have arrived there passively, e.g., through timber transports (VALDEÓN et al. 2010) or actively along railway lines (COVACIU-MARCOV et al. 2006). Molecular analyses will unravel the origin of this population. The closest known population is found in the Parnitha Mountains at approximately 700 m a.s.l., located 16 km northeast of the new Athenian record (PAFILIS & SIMOU 2006).



Fig. 1: Female *Podarcis muralis* (LAURENTI, 1768), (NHMC 80.3.55.146) from west Athens, Greece.

The Common Wall Lizard can exist close to or within human settlements (TOTH et al. 2006) even very large cities (CAPULA et al. 1993; STRUGARIU et al. 2008). The population detected in Athens was established probably only recently and, given the species' high ecological plasticity (MALETZKY et al. 2011; VIGNOLI et al. 2015), can be expected to expand its distribution. Potential negative consequences that *P. muralis* may induce to autochthonous lizards (MÜNCH 2001; MOLE 2010), together with the newly reported lacertid species in Athens metropolitan area (ADAMOPOULOU 2015; HEDMAN et al. 2017) underscore the need for high alert.

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