



Biologia

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Sexual Size Dimorphism in the Italian Wall Lizard: Do Size and Age Influence Color Patterns?

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The Italian Wall Lizard, *Podarcis siculus*, is widely distributed throughout most of Italy. These lizards are very variable morphologically, but they have been studied almost exclusively in habitats of the Western Adriatic coast (island and mainland populations of Croatia). It is still unknown if the morphological variation represents a genetic polymorphism or plasticity since the main phenotypic traits have not yet been studied in detail. We examined 114 wall lizards from one beach and one grassland area (5 km apart) on the northern Tyrrhenian coast of Italy to compare phenotypic traits between sexes and between areas. Body size related traits showed a marked sexual dimorphism, with males larger in all considered traits. For the first time in lizards, we estimated age from visual count of parietal scale LAGs: median age of males was three years and median age of females was two years. Large individuals of both sexes have green jaws, whereas smaller lizards have white or grey jaws. Femoral pores were more numerous in males than in females, and fluctuating asymmetry in this trait was evident and differed between sexes and areas. In males, the number of active pores (ratio of secreting pores/total hind limb pores) varied between areas (0.59 vs. 0.71), but not significantly. The number of active pores was positively related to head and body size in males, but was not related to age or to green jaws. Our results suggest that different areas may shape overall morphology in male and female lizards differently.

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