

Western green lizard *Lacerta bilineata*



The Green lizard in Jersey is near to the northern limit of its European range. It is most commonly found around the coast, particularly in the coastal heathland of the west and south west of the island. Although it has been recorded in Jersey since the late seventeenth century, when Poingdestre wrote: "As for our greene and yellow Lizards soe frequent in eury hedge, soe tame and harmless", it is no longer to be found inland.



Size – Green lizards are amongst the largest of European lizards. Males may grow up to 40cm in length and weigh more than 35g. In Jersey they are usually smaller, measuring up to 30cm in length and weighing up to 30g

Features – The green lizard can be highly variable in appearance. Throughout mainland Europe the male is typically green with black speckling along its back. In Jersey, the black speckling can be so pronounced as to make the males appear to be black with green speckling. Its short, deep head is dark and patterned with light spots. The throat of the male is blue during mating season in the spring, although some females also share this distinctive feature. The female may be green or brown and occasionally has blotches on its skin. The female green lizard may also have two or four narrow lines running along the sides of its body, which can occasionally be bordered by black spots or have black edges. Both sexes usually have yellow bellies. They are diurnal (active during the day) and are most likely to be seen on a warm sunny day from April through to mid-October.

Habitat – The Green lizard is most often to be found on the maritime heathland and dunes of the west and south-west of the island. Areas of gorse, heather and bramble provide good cover. The lizards are easiest to see in the morning, basking in the sun near to these areas of cover.

Feeding – They feed on a variety of arthropods and other invertebrates, such as ants, woodlice, earwigs, grasshoppers, butterflies, caterpillars and spiders. Bumble bees are a particular favourite! They also occasionally eat fruit such as blackberries.

Reproduction – Green lizards are oviparous (lay eggs). In Jersey they lay 8-10 soft shelled eggs (a clutch). In May or June, the female will dig a nest burrow in sandy soil, or in decomposing vegetation. Incubation takes 7 – 15 weeks and the young, which are initially brown, with a lime green belly, hatch in late August or early September.



The green lizard is protected by the Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000.