

Arboreal behaviour in a coastal population of Bocage's Wall Lizard (*Podarcis bocagei*)

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INTRODUCTION

Bocage's Wall Lizard (*Podarcis bocagei*, López Seoane, 1884) is an endemic species from the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula (GALÁN, 2015). *P. bocagei* is a ground dwelling species that usually colonizes open areas where the vegetation has been cleared, while in areas with dense vegetation it occupies edges, slopes, rocky outcrops and constructions (GALÁN, 1994).

OBSERVATION

During a survey for reptiles in a coastal area, I observed several Bocage's Wall Lizards (*Podarcis bocagei*) basking on ornamental olive trees (*Olea europaea*). This planting of trees in curious areas like roundabouts seems to be a fairly recent fashion in Spain. The lizards were observed in a gardened area on 1st October 2020, in Baiona, Pontevedra, Spain (UTM 29TNG06, ETRS89, 13 masl). One male was detected basking 2 m above the ground.

Arboreal behaviour has been reported for several lizard's species, including *Darevskia dryada* (DAREVSKY & TUNIYEV, 1997), *Podarcis hispanica* complex in North Africa

(KALIONTZOPOULOU et al., 2009), *P. hispanica* complex (type I/II) in Portugal (MALKMUS, 2004) and *P. hispanica* complex (type II) in Southern Spain (GONZÁLEZ DE LA VEGA, 1988). But this behaviour is reported as rare in other species from the genus *Podarcis*, e.g. in *Podarcis muralis* and *Podarcis sicula* (ARNOLD & OVENDEN, 2007) or from the genus *Iberolacerta* (ARRIBAS, 2012).

GALÁN (2011) claimed that in areas overgrown by dense vegetation *P. bocagei* used trees as basking spots. In this case the area was clear of dense vegetation and there were plenty of places to bask. The management of this resting area, with olive trees being aggressively pruned and losing the crown, promotes the creation of a belt of regrowths at the base and cup of the trees that could prevent the access of lizard predators like feral cats or gulls. Thus, it seems that olive trees were selected as a refuge rather than as basking areas.

It seems more than an anecdotal description of a behaviour but rather an adaptation to an artificial area, as *P. bocagei* individuals were observed several times on ornamental olive trees in different gardened areas in the study zone.

SUMMARY

Arboreal behaviour in *Podarcis bocagei* inhabiting a coastal habitat in Northwestern Spain is reported in this note. Ornamental olive trees were selected as a refuge rather than as basking areas.



Podarcis bocagei habitat as reported here.
Photo: Google Streetview®



Male *Podarcis bocagei* basking on an ornamental olive tree.

Photos: César Ayres

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