

COMMON LIZARD

(*Zootoca vivipara*)



Identification:

- Adults up to 15 cm in length (including tail).
- Males have a larger head and slimmer body than females, and prominent swelling at the base of the tail.
- Usually a shade of brown but colour variants include yellow, green and black.
- Pattern of spots and/or stripes down the back.
- Males have a yellow/orange belly with black spots. Females have a pale, un-spotted belly.
- Often mistaken for newts. Lizards have scaly, rather than smooth, skin and move away very quickly when disturbed.



Distribution:

- Native to the UK.
- Widespread throughout the UK, including Ireland, but numbers thought to be declining.
- Found throughout central and northern Europe.

Ecology

- Essentially a ground-dweller but may be seen climbing.
- Favours open, sunny places and dry, exposed locations near to dense cover.



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- Feed on worms, slugs and insects.

Lifecycle:

- Adult lizards emerge from hibernation in early spring. Mating takes place in April.
- Females incubate eggs for 6-13 weeks inside their bodies and 'give birth' to up to 11 live young in July/August.
- Juvenile lizards less than 5cm in length. Darker in colour than the adults.
- Adults and juveniles spend autumn feeding on invertebrates in preparation for winter.
- Lizards hibernate, often in groups, amongst rocks or dead wood between November and March.
- Individuals may take advantage of milder weather to forage.



Predators and other threats:

- Can drop its tail if caught by a predator.
- Numbers thought to be declining in the UK due to habitat loss and degradation.



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