

Arboreal basking behaviour of *Podarcis muralis* lizards

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RESUMEN: Se informa sobre el comportamiento arborícola de ejemplares de *Podarcis muralis* que utilizan regularmente, como lugar de asoleamiento, el tronco de una buganvilla plantada en un jardín. Las observaciones se vienen repitiendo de modo habitual desde la primavera de 2013, cuando se observó este comportamiento por primera vez.

The common wall lizard, *Podarcis muralis*, inhabits a wide diversity of habitats in Cantabria, from coastal limestone cliffs with an abundant herbaceous substrate (Diego-Rasilla *et al.*, 2001; Diego-Rasilla, 2015) to areas of medium and high mountains where they prefer limestone outcrops, rocks and boulders, and clear and sunny areas in oak and beech forests (Ayllón *et al.*, 2010; Diego-Rasilla, 2015). In this region, it is also a markedly anthropophilic species (Diego-Rasilla, 2003a, 2003b, 2015); they are comfortable in gardens and occupy stone walls and other human constructions.

In human settlements, they usually use walls of buildings, stone walls, pavement plates, or concrete blocks for basking (Diego-Rasilla, 2015). Surprisingly, the thermoregulatory arboreal behaviour of *P. muralis* in a private garden in Cantabria (43°17'N / 4°4'W; 59 masl) has been observed on a regular basis since Spring 2013. Interestingly, wall lizards bask on the trunk (height: 315 cm, diameter: 23 cm) of a bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spectabilis*), the only tree in the garden. Naturally, they also bask on a limestone rockery, paving slate plates, and a concrete blocks wall in the garden. In most observations, one to three lizards were basking simultaneously on the trunk of the bougainvillea, 10 to 25 cm above the ground,

but lizards have also been observed basking on the trunk as high as 125 to 150 cm above the ground (Figure 1). They do not seem to be seeking shelter in the tree, because the bark does not provide refuge; also, in this garden, they are not exposed to predators, such as cats, and they exhibit a tame behaviour to approach



Figure 1: Common wall lizards basking more than 1 m above the ground.

Figura 1: Lagartijas roqueras asoleándose a más de 1 m por encima del suelo.

ching humans, since are habituated (Diego-Rasilla, 2003a). In fact, they often bask on exposed places, such as paving slate plates, regardless of the presence of people nearby.

Although, arboreal behaviour has been observed in other species of the genus *Podarcis* in the Iberian Peninsula (*P. hispanica* complex:

González de la Vega, 1988; Malkmus, 2004; *P. bocagei*: Galán, 2011; Ayres, 2020), to the best of my knowledge, the basking arboreal behaviour of *P. muralis* has not been previously reported.

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