
ORIGINAL ARTICLES

**Update on the status of the Green Lizard (*Lacerta viridis*)
and Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) in Jersey**

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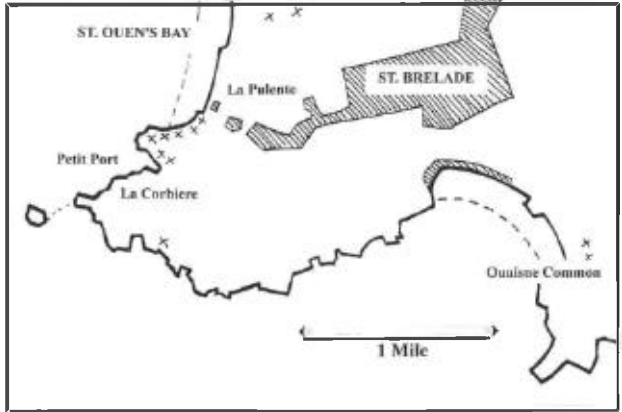
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ON the 4th and 5th of May 1996 Jan Clemons and Michael Lambert headed a BHS Conservation Committee visit to Jersey and reported on both the various herpetofaunal captive breeding programmes being undertaken by the Jersey Wildlife Trust and Zoo and the status of the indigenous Jersey herpetofauna (Clemons et al., 1996). We saw neither the rare Agile Frog, *Rana dalmatina*, nor the island's collar-less morph of the

Grass Snake, *Natrix natrix*, for the reasons stated in the report. We visited two Green Lizard sites, Ouaisne Common and the coast between La Corbiere and La Pulente, observing animals at the former. We also visited Mont Orgeil castle at Gorey, where the best population of Jersey's Wall Lizards are extant, seeing several. This year (2001) my wife and I visited Jersey between 20th and 25th September, managing to get accommodation

at Petit Port, which lies between La Corbiere and La Pulente, in the southwest of the island, on that part of the coast where we failed to see Green Lizards in 1996. We arrived in Jersey on the 20th at 13:30 hrs. It was sunny and warm with the temperature about 18°C. Between 14:30 and 17:00 hrs we saw five adult and two baby Green Lizards basking at the side of the coastal path between Petit Port and La Pulente, and a further two adults basking in islands of shrubs scattered about the heath that lies between the Quennevais Sand Dunes and St. Ouen's Bay. This heath runs from La Pulente right up to the northwestern-most corner of Jersey. Two male animals seen were very brightly coloured, their dark background hue being offset by spots of brilliant, luminous green. As mentioned in the 1996 report, the Jersey Green Lizards differ considerably in colour from those on the French mainland.

The following morning we walked in a southwesterly direction round the La Corbiere lighthouse and to the coastal heaths beyond. We were disappointed to see extensive fire damage to vegetation near houses south of the lighthouse, which we assumed to be accidental. We saw our first and only Green Lizard of the day, a brightly coloured male which had recently shed its tail, near a disused railway line three quarters of a mile further round the coast. Next day we visited Mont Orgueil. Since the 1996 visit, very efficient conservation of south facing wall space and adjacent feeding grounds forming the Wall Lizards' habitat had been put in place, together with an information board about the lizards themselves. We saw many lizards, including two males with interesting dark green backs, very unlike those of the greyish Brittany animals or the lime green backs of males at Ventnor, Isle of Wight. This castle environment is stated as being the southern-most habitat of the Wall Lizard on Jersey (although an introduced colony is present on St Aubin's Castle in the south of the island) (Tonge, 1986). It was therefore with great interest that we noticed a female basking on the surround of a flower bed on Gorey promenade at least a third of a mile south of the castle. I made a video (my first!) of the lizards. It was very poor, with quite dreadful shake. Nevertheless I did manage to



Map of southwestern Jersey showing location of Green Lizard sightings (denoted by crosses).

show a male responding to my whistling. On being assaulted by a squeaky version of *The Liverpool Strand* it slowly walked towards me, cocking its head to one side. Sunday 23rd September was a mixture of sunshine and showers. We found two baby Green Lizards on the coastal path right at Petit Port at 10:30 hrs, and in the afternoon went to Ouaisne Common. In May 1996 we saw several lizards. This time we saw only two babies at approximately 12:30 hrs. By then rain was threatening and the air seemed considerably cooler than during the last few days.

During this visit to Jersey, Green Lizards and Wall Lizards were the only reptile or amphibian species seen. Both seem to be thriving and we were impressed at the conservation measures put in place by the States of Jersey to protect these two lizards, particularly after the quite dense urbanisation of the countryside lying immediately behind the protected coastal heaths in the west and the large numbers of both British and French holiday makers visiting Mont Orgueil in the east. It was very pleasant indeed to be able to still see so many attractive reptiles in such a small, crowded island.

REFERENCES

- Clemons, J. & Lambert, M. (1996). Herpetology in Jersey: A report of the 1996 visit to Jersey organised by the Conservation Committee. *Brit. Herpetol. Soc. Bull.* No. 57, 33-40.
- Tonge, S. (1986). The Herpetofauna of Jersey. *Brit. Herpetol. Soc. Bull.* No. 17, 18-21.