

Research Day | March 15, 2017

Title: Recent rapid dispersal of European Wall Lizards in BC

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Abstract:

Invasive exotic species are a global problem, and the mild climate of southwestern British Columbia is particularly prone to establishment of exotic species. This province has a long history of exotic introductions, and with each new species, the natural character of the province is changed forever. Some introduced species like the European Robin, vanished without a trace. At the other end of the spectrum, Green Crab, English Ivy, and Himalayan Blackberry have spread rapidly and overwhelm areas where they are established. Very few reptile species have been released in British Columbia, and of these, only the European Wall Lizard has proven to be invasive. In the early 1970s, twelve wall lizards from northern Italy were released onto Vancouver Island, and by 2004, had not spread far. In the last 12 years though, we have seen rapid spread of this invasive lizard, and it now ranges across the Saanich Peninsula south to Triangle Mountain. In the last three years, new populations appeared in Campbell River, Cobble Hill, Mill Bay and Shawnigan Lake, a single lizard appeared in North Vancouver, and two have been found in Osoyoos. This recent and rapid spread of European Wall Lizards will be the subject of a peer-reviewed research paper in collaboration with researchers from Habitat Acquisition Trust and the Ministry of Environment. As part of my involvement with IMISWG (Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group), I also will assess the situation in Osoyoos to see if a population has established near the United States border. While the lizards on Vancouver Island now are beyond control, a newly established population in Osoyoos could be eradicated to prevent dispersal in the Okanagan region. As a follow-up to the range record paper, I will begin collecting lizards for a dietary analysis to see whether European Wall Lizards impact Species at Risk or other native species on southern Vancouver Island. This dietary study will be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal and made available to a global audience.



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