



## **The IWT National Survey of the Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) in Ireland 2007**



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National Parks and Wildlife Service**



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
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Some of the many photographs submitted to IWT during 2007



## 1.0 Common Lizard, *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin – A Description

The Common Lizard, *Lacerta vivipara* is Ireland's only native reptile species. The slow-worm, *Anguis fragilis*, is found in the Burren in small numbers. However it is believed to have been deliberately introduced in the 1970's (McGuire and Marnell, 2000). The common lizard has one of the widest distribution ranges of any vertebrate in the world, extending from Ireland and northern Spain, across central and northern Europe, Russia and as far as the western Pacific coastline. The Common Lizard also has the most northerly range of any reptile, occurring on the Barent Sea coast in Russia (Beebee and Griffiths, 2000).

Although present in Ireland since the end of the last ice age, the common lizard remains an elusive animal and many people are surprised to learn of the species' existence here. Reptiles tend to be thought of as "exotic creatures" living in jungles or deserts, yet the common lizard has adapted remarkably well to the cool and wet Irish climatic conditions. The most significant adaptation is that the common lizard is viviparous i.e. gives birth to live young, unlike most other reptiles that lay eggs which require a certain period of time to incubate externally. The often cool, wet and changeable Irish summers could not guarantee successful egg hatching. However, the common lizard lays eggs in typical reptilian manner in the Massif Central region of France and the Pyrenees, as a result of warmer and sunnier summers (Arnold and Burton and Ovenden, 1992).

It appears that the common lizard is frequently mistaken and confused with the smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris* L.), (Marnell, 2002). This animal is Ireland's only newt species and its similar body shape and size allows for possible misidentification between the two. Closer inspection of a newt or lizard reveals that common lizards, being reptiles, have scaly and dry skin whereas newts, being amphibians, have moist skin. Newts have four toes on their two front legs and lizards have five. An examination of the immediate local habitat can also help to correctly identify which is which. Newts tend to be slow-moving and sluggish when not in their breeding ponds and are found in damp, cool microhabitats whereas lizards are generally sighted in warm, sunny locations (Marnell, 2002).

The common lizard is generally about 10 to 16 cm in length (including the tail), with the tail about twice as long as the body. Colouration varies from an olive green with brown and black markings to brown and grey. Males tend to have a colourful and spotted underside whereas the females have a pale underside with no or few spotted markings. Young and newly born lizards, whelps, are almost black in colour. This variation in colourings and markings may be a camouflage response to the local topographical and habitat conditions.

Common lizards, like all reptiles, rely on thermoregulation in order to regulate their body temperature. This is because they have no internal temperature regulation system. In order to increase their body temperature to an optimum temperature of 30 degrees celsius, they need to bask in sunshine. The common lizard is heliothermic i.e. it relies on the heat of the sun in order to stay active. The common lizard can also absorb heat from a suitable surface such as a rock to increase its body temperature

(thigmothermy). Due to their reliance on plentiful sunshine, the common lizard hibernates during the winter months, though may emerge in mild winter weather. With Irish winters apparently starting to become milder and the frequency of cold weather conditions diminishing, as a result of global climate change, it may be speculated that the common lizard's hibernation period will become shorter in the future.

## **2.0 Introduction to the 2007 Survey**

### **2.1 How “common” is the common lizard in Ireland?**

There is a certain degree of irony in the inclusion of “common” in this lizard's name as despite a presence of the common lizard in Ireland since the ending of the last Ice Age, it is probably the one of the least known and sighted of our native fauna. It would appear that due to its small size, body colourations and quick fleeing response to approaching people, most people have never encountered a common lizard.

Up until relatively recently there has been a lack of comprehensive studies into the distribution of the common lizard in Ireland. The first papers and maps detailing amphibian and reptilian distribution in Ireland and Britain appeared in the *British Journal of Herpetology* (Taylor 1948, 1963). In 1979, the *Provisional Distribution Atlas of Amphibians, Reptiles and Mammals in Ireland* (Ni Lamhna, 1979) was published which indicated a widespread yet rather patchy common lizard distribution throughout Ireland.

It was not until 2002 that Marnell published a paper that described both distribution and habitat of the common lizard in Ireland, following a ten year long nationwide survey and incorporating results collected from the 1996-1997 Irish Wildlife Trust nationwide common lizard survey. In 2004, 2005 and 2007 further IWT surveys have revealed that the common lizard is a relatively common animal in certain parts of Ireland, such as coastal and bogland areas. However more in-depth survey and sampling work is required before exact information regarding distribution and frequency can be confidently provided.

### **2.2 History of Common Lizard surveys in Ireland**

The first *Irish Wildlife Trust* (IWT) nationwide survey of the common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) was carried out between the years 1996 – 1997. The results of this survey were combined with the works of herpetologist Ferdia Marnell and published in 2002 (Marnell, 2002). This survey combined with the work of Marnell resulted in important information regarding the lizard's seemingly preferred habitats (bogland 22%, sand dunes 15% and stone walls 13%) and also revealed the counties in Ireland where lizards were present or absent. The 1996 – 1997 survey resulted in sightings being recorded in 27 counties, with counties Tyrone, Derry, Longford, Carlow and Armagh as the only counties where no sightings of the common lizard were reported from.

In 2004, the *Irish Wildlife Trust* received sponsorship from *The Heritage Council* enabling a second nationwide survey of the common lizard to be undertaken. This survey resulted in over 150 public sightings from across Ireland. The majority of

sightings were forwarded via email, which demonstrates the important role that the internet and email play in public participation surveys of this nature.

In 2005, *The Heritage Council* again provided funding for a nationwide survey and again the level of public participation was high. This survey resulted in 113 sightings being recorded, down on the figure for 2004. As this survey was the third one carried out by the *Irish Wildlife Trust*, comparisons and similarities between the three started to reveal important information such as the habitat preference for bogland and the abundance of sightings from coastal areas as opposed to more inland locations.

### **2.3 National Common Lizard Survey 2007**

In 2007, the Irish Wildlife Trust carried out a fourth nationwide common lizard survey with generous sponsorship from National Parks and Wildlife Service. The 2007 survey was the most successful to date with over 169 sightings received, despite the wet weather experienced in Ireland during June and July. Of particular interest is the fact that during 2006, when no survey was ongoing, 50 reports from the public were forwarded on to the IWT. This is a remarkable figure considering that there was no active campaign during 2006. This number of sightings indicates that the presence of the common lizard in Ireland and the previous surveys carried out by IWT are beginning to gain recognition amongst the general public. The results from 2006 and 2007 have been combined to give a total of 219 lizard sightings.

The 2007 survey proved popular with the public and also the media. Similar to previous surveys, the media played a vital role in publicising the survey and following numerous newspaper, magazine and radio articles and discussions, the number of lizard sightings forwarded to IWT reached a record level. Combined with the results of the three previous surveys, 1996-1997, 2004 and 2005, a more accurate and clearer picture of the status of the Common Lizard in Ireland starts to emerge. Important data regarding habitat preference and abundance can be consolidated from the combined survey sightings. The accuracy and attention to detail of the majority of sightings increase the validity of public sighting based surveys and the resulting data forms a sound foundation on which future scientific sampling tests can be based.

Habitat degradation is perhaps the most serious threat to Irish flora and fauna. There is no doubt that many of the lizard's favoured habitats such as sand dunes and boglands (highlighted from Marnell's survey work (2002) and the IWT's previous nationwide surveys) have suffered as a result of the dramatic increase in the construction activity due to Ireland's rapid economic growth over the last decade. Many of the preferred habitats have been completely eradicated or nearly degraded to a point of non viability.

The findings of nationwide surveys will help to identify areas where lizards are more abundant and will form the basis, along with others, of the continuing arguments to afford these habitats the necessary protection to ensure their long term survival. The surveys to date have proved useful in determining the distribution of the common lizard throughout Ireland. It is essential that the surveys are carried out at least every two years in order to build up a greater insight into the status of the common lizard.

Scientific sampling in specific areas is also required so that clearer and more precise data can be collected and also used in the argument for greater habitat protection.

### **3.0 Methodology**

Unlike the 2005 survey, the sightings recorded in 2007 were all received from members of the public. In 2005, 23% of the sightings were as a result of two scientific sampling surveys carried out in Fingal and Glendalough.

Email was the predominant means of disseminating awareness of the Common Lizard Survey 2007 to members of the public. A standard email was compiled and forwarded to a diverse range of interest groups. The email consisted of a brief description of the common lizard and its habitat preferences, the importance of the IWT's survey work and details on how to report sightings. A photograph of a lizard and a downloadable poster of the survey for display purposes were also attached with each email.

The interest groups that were targeted are listed as follows:

1. All the local and national newspapers of Ireland (the survey was conducted on a thirty two county basis)
2. All the local and national radio and television stations of Ireland
3. All E.U "Blue Flag" beaches and marinas of Ireland
4. 25% of all primary schools in counties Offaly, Laois, Carlow and Monaghan ( these counties were specifically targeted because of a scarcity of common lizard sightings reported to IWT in previous surveys)
5. Outdoor organisations such as walking clubs, mountaineering clubs and boating clubs
6. All of the environmental departments and organisations of the Irish Government and of Northern Ireland. (A common lizard fact sheet written by members of IWT was available from ENFO).
7. All of the non-government environmental organisations of Ireland
8. All national wildlife parks and most of the educational, historical and scenic tourist attraction sights in Ireland
9. Most of the biological science and nature publications of Ireland

The Irish Wildlife Trust's website, [www.iwt.ie](http://www.iwt.ie), had an online lizard sighting form (Appendix A, page 18) that members of the public could use to send in sightings via email or print off and submit by post.

The emails were sent at the end of May and numerous reminders (if required) were forwarded to the target groups throughout the summer.

The response to the emails was extremely positive particularly amongst the media. Articles appeared in *The Irish Times*, *Evening Herald*, *Daily Mail*, *The Star*, *The Irish News*, *The Farmer's Journal* and in over fifteen regional and county newspapers. A number of local and national radio stations also featured interviews with representatives from the IWT to discuss the common lizard and the survey campaign.

Email was the predominant means by which members of the public submitted sightings, with 85%, 186 of total, of all common lizard sightings for 2006 and 2007 being sent via email. This high figure reflects the growing number of households with internet and broadband connection in Ireland today. 9% of sightings were sent via postal letters and the remaining 6% were reported via telephone conversations. Sightings sent via email, are more beneficial as the survey questions are specific and require accurate information, such as weather details and lizard behaviour to be submitted. Also from an administrative perspective, electronic data is easier to manage and process.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Lizard sightings per county**

Lizard sightings were recorded in 29 counties; the highest number of counties in any single survey to date. Counties not represented in the 2007 survey are Monaghan, Laois and Westmeath. However, it should be noted that there were 4 common lizard sightings recorded in Monaghan during the 2005 lizard survey. This leaves just 2 counties in Ireland, Laois and Westmeath that have not submitted a lizard sighting during the 2004, 2005 or 2007 surveys. The numbers of lizard sightings per county are shown in Table 1, page 9. The county that submitted the highest number of lizard sightings is Wicklow. The combined number of sightings for Wicklow for 2006 and 2007 is 42. This represents 19% of the total two year sightings (219). Cork had 26 sightings (11.8% of total) followed by Galway with 24 sightings (10.9% of total). 6 counties, Armagh, Carlow, Louth, Meath, Offaly and Tyrone had only one lizard sighting each.

One important trend that has begun to emerge, based on the four surveys to date is the likelihood of higher number of lizard sightings from a coastal county opposed to an inland county. The 2005 survey revealed that 60.8% of the lizard sightings were from coastal counties. The combined 2006 and 2007 sightings reveal this figure to have significantly increased to 90%. Out of the 6 counties, Armagh, Carlow, Louth, Offaly, Meath and Tyrone to submit only 1 sighting each, only Louth has a coastline. This fact, along with the non submission of a lizard sighting from Monaghan, Laois and Westmeath (inland counties), during 2006 and 2007 strengthens the evidence that the common lizard is a species with a preference for coastal habitats.

### **4.2 Time of year of sightings**

The common lizard hibernates during the winter months, usually from November through to February. However, it may awaken at any time during hibernation if the weather is very mild. The number of sightings per month is shown in Table 2 on page 10. The month with the highest number of lizard sightings is July with 62 reports, or 28% of total. This would reflect peak lizard activity and would also be a time when greater numbers of the public are out and about, thus increasing the chances of a sighting report. August yielded 39 reports, 18% of total. Interestingly April came third with 28 sightings, 13% of total. This was no doubt as a result of the very sunny and warm weather experienced during the month in 2007. It would normally be expected that June or May would have ranked higher than April.

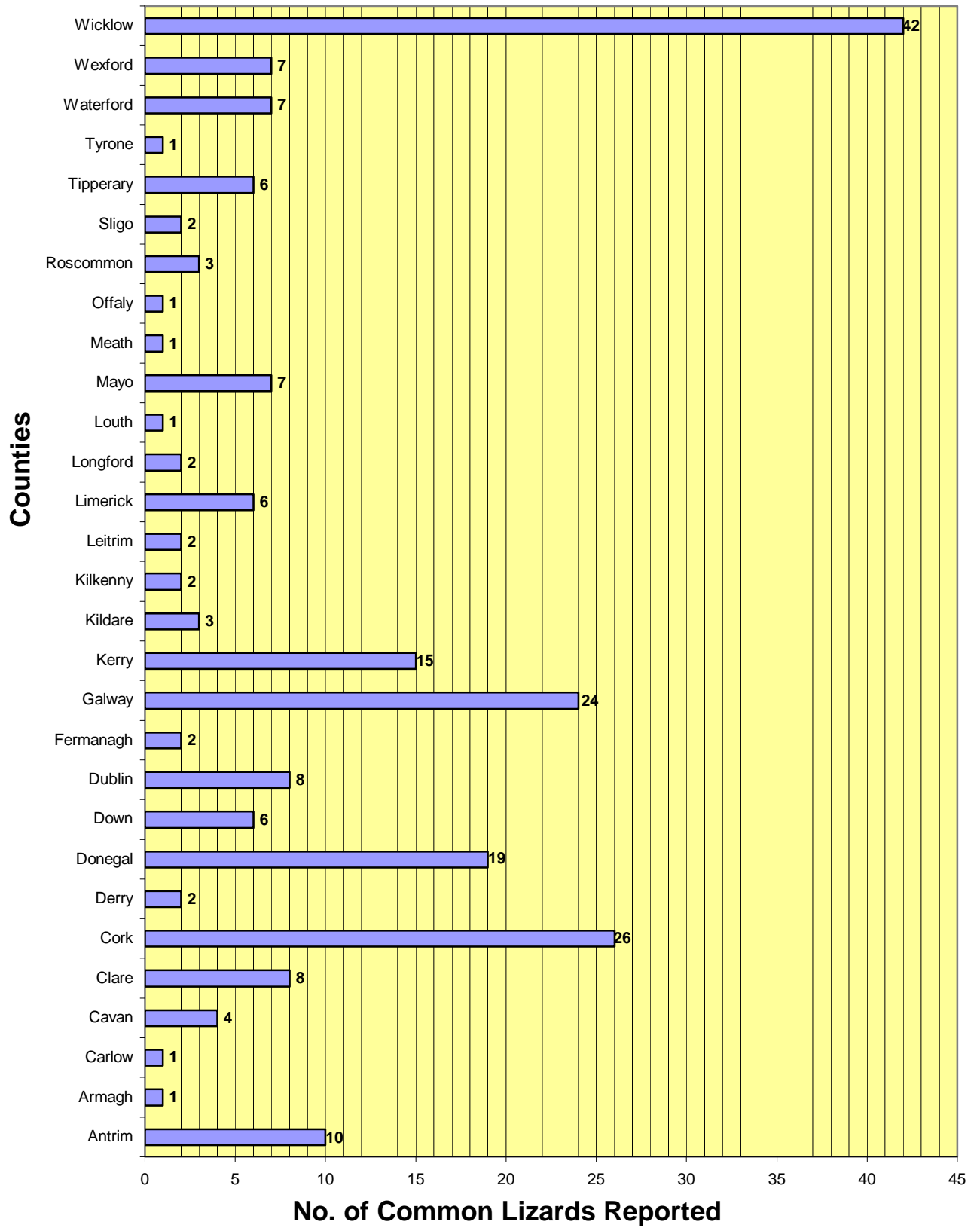


The earliest sighting received was from the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007 where a homeowner found a lizard in his sitting room in Co. Tipperary. The latest record was on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007 from Co. Donegal where the respondent came across a lizard behind some vegetation in his garden. Lizards are frequently seen in this garden basking on a stone wall.

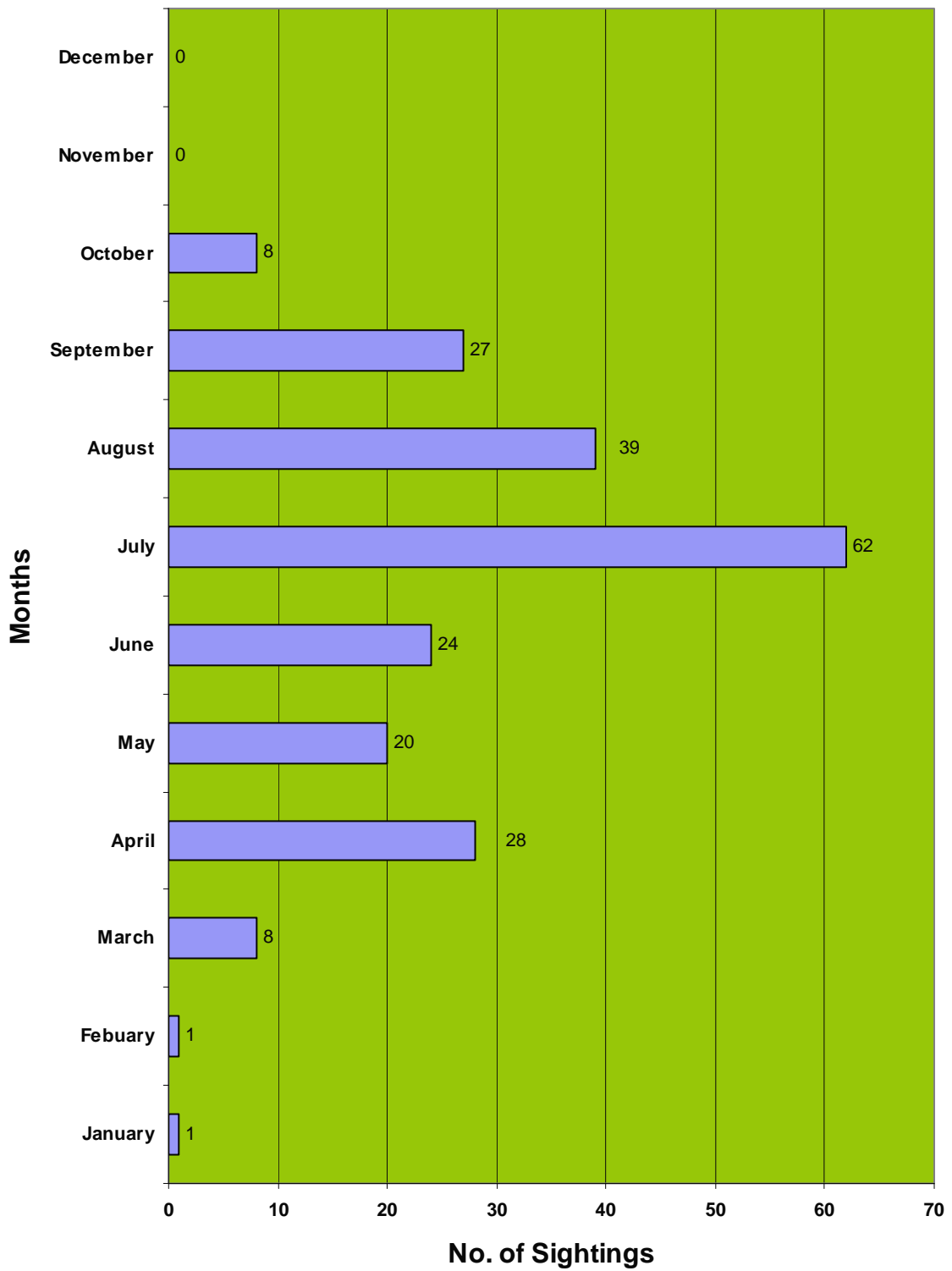


*A common lizard sighted along a boardwalk at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow*

**Table 1. Lizard Sightings by County**



**Table 2. Time of Year of Lizard Sightings**



### 4.3 Habitat types of common lizards

There were a total of 12 different habitat types from which common lizards were recorded, from sightings received in 2006 and 2007. Out of the 219 sightings for both these years, 11 sightings did not specify the habitat type. This represents 5% of the total number of submitted sightings. Where sightings did not include habitat details, efforts were made to contact the members of the public who made the sightings to clarify such details. This proved successful in some cases and helped to ensure a “not given” response of 5%, which is an acceptable figure; given the fact the survey is a public participation one. The twelve habitat types and corresponding lizard sightings are shown in Table 3, page 11.

The most striking result regarding habitats is the high level of reports from rural gardens, 38 or 17% of total. Of great benefit was the additional habitat description that accompanied reports from rural gardens i.e. the surrounding habitat was mentioned and described. The most common surrounding habitat was bogland. Many people mentioned the fact that the lizards were spotted basking on stone walls, patios and rockeries. This signifies the adaptation of lizards to artificial anthropogenic surfaces to aid basking. A well planted garden with adequate vegetation cover and open areas with stone/ornamental features would no doubt offer a suitable habitat for a lizard

The high incidence of lizards reported from gardens may represent an “overspill” effect. Perhaps population levels reached an unsustainable level in adjacent habitats and the lizards sought out new territories? Out of the 13 sightings classified as urban, 8 were from urban gardens; the remaining 5 were from roads and car parks in an urban environment. When combined with the sightings classified as “inside/immediately adjacent to a dwelling/building”, 20 in total and the urban garden figure of 8, the total of lizards sighted in very close proximity to humans rises to 66. This represents a total of 30%.

The 2005 survey also produced a high figure for rural gardens of 17% and when combined with the figure for sightings from inside a house this rose to 24%. Perhaps this high level of sightings from gardens is as a result of natural habitats coming under pressure and forcing lizards to adapt to living in close proximity to humans or maybe it is not a new phenomenon. As a result of our campaign and publicity, perhaps people realised the importance of their sightings and contacted us as some respondents did mention that they saw lizards frequently in their gardens over a number of years.

Boglands returned a total of 33 sightings, 15% of total. The term bogland is an umbrella term that describes the three major bog types found in Ireland, Atlantic blanket bog, Mountain blanket bog and raised bog. Despite past and ongoing exploitation of boglands, for peat, these areas are still a very important habitat for the common lizard due to the large abundance of insect life that inhabit these areas, the presence of vegetation cover such as bracken and heather and the opportunities for basking afforded by rocky outcrops.

Grasslands as a habitat were reported in 32 sightings, 14% of total. The term grassland is again an umbrella term used to describe various grasslands such as

meadows, unimproved farmland, roadside verges and parklands. One striking fact is that agricultural land such as pastures and crop fields returned only 4 sightings, approximately 2%. This would indicate that perhaps modern farming practices have a negative impact on the common lizard's requirements such as overuse of pesticides on crops and removal of stone walls that allow basking.

Coastal areas also provided high numbers of sightings. The coastal habitats were described as sand dunes/sandy beach and rocky/sea cliffs. The combined number of sightings for both habitats is 35, 16% of total. Mountainous habitat was reported in 15 sightings, 7% of total. Some very interesting reports were received of lizards being sighted at or near the top of mountains, some over 700 metres in height. This fact demonstrates how adaptable to the Irish climate the common lizard is.

The remaining sightings were divided between a range of other habitats. Of significance is that many of the respondents to the survey mentioned the fact that rocky outcrops or stones were present. These rocks and stone surfaces would provide a suitable location for basking.

**Table 3. Habitat types of the Common Lizard**

<b>Habitat Type</b>	<b>No. of Lizards</b>
Urban Gardens / Car Parks / Streets	13
Rural Gardens	38
Agricultural Land	4
Bogland	33
Mountainous	15
Sandy Beaches / Dunes	17
Rocky Shoreline / Cliffs	18
Grasslands	32
Scrublands	7
Inside / Immediately Adjacent to a House	20
Woodland	4
Limestone Pavement	7
Not Given	11
	<b>Total 219</b>

#### **4.4 Weather conditions at time of lizard sighting**

The weather conditions described in reports is shown in Table 4, page 12. The majority of lizard sightings occurred during periods of good weather with 79 reports describing the weather as sunny and warm, (36% of total). Sunny with occasional cloud cover accounted for 76 or 35% of the reports. It is interesting to note that during April 2007, when there were 25 reports submitted, all the reports described the weather as sunny and warm. According to Met Eireann, April 2007 was the warmest and sunniest since records began at a number of stations. This favourable weather combined with the tendency for people to be out and about resulted in more sightings received for May or June.

The Irish summer of 2007 will be remembered by many as a particularly wet season with what seemed like continuous heavy rain and flash flooding for the entire months of June and July. While the rainfall totals were up to twice the average level, it must be noted that this rain tended to fall in heavy bursts, intercepted with sunny spells. Indeed Met Eireann's figures show that some parts of Ireland recorded above average sunshine for July. Despite concerns that the poor weather would have a negative effect on numbers of sightings received, this fear was not realised.

**Table 4. Weather Conditions at Time of Lizard Sighting**

<b>Weather conditions</b>	<b>No. of lizards</b>
Sunny / Warm	79
Sunny spells / Cloudy	76
Sunny spells / Showers	31
Overcast	17
Damp / Wet	5
Not Given	11
	<b>Total 219</b>

#### **4.5 Time of day of lizard sighting**

The time of day on which the lizard sighting occurred is a useful piece of information as it indicates when lizards are more likely to be observed. Daylight hours were divided into six 3-hour intervals, 6am – 9am, 9am – 12pm, 12pm – 3pm, 3pm – 6pm, 6pm – 9pm and 9pm – 12 am.

The 12pm to 3pm provided the most frequent reports with 87 sightings, 40% of total. The next highest number of sightings occurred during the 9am – 12pm interval with 68 reports, 31% of total. The intervals with the lowest number of sightings were both 6am – 9am and 9pm – 12am with only 3 reports each. During the period 11am and 3pm, the air temperatures are generally at their highest, thus affording lizards more opportunities for basking.

**Table 5. Time of Day of Lizard Sightings**

<b>Time of Day of Sighting</b>	<b>No. of lizards</b>
6am – 9am	3
9am – 12pm	68
12pm – 3pm	87
3pm – 6pm	43
6pm – 9pm	15
9pm – 12 am	3
	<b>Total 219</b>

#### **4.6 Lizard behaviour at time of sighting**

The most prevalent behaviour of common lizards reported in 2006 and 2007 was basking, 156 or 71% of total. This is a time when a lizard is exposed on a surface to

maximise exposure to the sun, therefore increasing the opportunities for it to be observed. The problem with behavioural descriptions is what constitutes basking as opposed to resting? Or hunting as opposed to fleeing? To simplify the responses, we are recording the behaviour of the lizard when immediately sighted. An example is where the respondents reported that the lizard fled after they disturbed it while basking. In an example such as this, basking is taken as the behaviour as to flee is the lizard's natural responsive instinct.

The next most reported behaviour of a lizard was remaining still / inactive, 49 or 22% of total. Some of the reports described lizards being found under discarded plastic wrappings or waste tin and that they did not immediately flee. It may be that the lizard feigns death in order to deter would be predators.

The remaining reports described lizard behaviour as "caught by a cat", 7 or 3.1% of total, "dead" 4, or 1.8% of total and "hunting" 3, 1.3% of total. One interesting report received was that a lizard was regularly seen swimming in a garden pond in Co. Wicklow. At first it was dismissed as a case of confusion between a newt and a lizard. However the respondent was adamant it was a lizard and mentioned the fact that they had kept reptiles as pets in the past and so were familiar with lizards. It was decided not to include this sighting in the survey, although common lizards are excellent swimmers. Photographic evidence was requested but was not produced.

#### **4.7 How did respondents hear about the National Lizard Survey 2007?**

The survey was publicised as much as possible through the media, notice boards at various locations in Ireland and word of mouth. The response to the 2007 survey proved excellent and sets a high standard for upcoming surveys. In order to gauge feedback, respondents were asked to note on the survey forms how they learned about the common lizard survey 2007?

The majority of respondents did an internet search themselves and were directed to the Irish Wildlife Trust's webpage.<sup>105</sup>, or 48% of total respondents heard about the survey in this manner, a figure that reflects the growing usage of the internet in Ireland. The vital role of the media was reflected in the fact that 79 or 36% of total of respondents learned about the survey after reading an article in a magazine or newspaper or heard it mentioned on radio.

This year, all blue flag beaches in Ireland, National Parks and many outdoor tourist attractions were targeted and this resulted in 27, or 12% of total sightings. Word of mouth was cited in the remaining 8 reports.

## **5.0 Discussion**

The overall results from the *Common Lizard Survey 2007* certainly strengthen the suggestions from previous surveys regarding common lizard distribution and habitat preference. It could be suggested that in Ireland in 2007, lizards are more likely to be

seen on bogland, or in a rural garden surrounded by bogland, during warm sunny weather, usually near a coastal location. Such a conclusion is correct if based purely on the facts and figures of the 2007 and previous surveys, without taking the biased nature of public participation surveys into consideration.

Public participation surveys are biased in that the highest number of reports will obviously correlate to areas with higher levels of human activity. An example from the 2007 survey is the 42 lizard sightings from Co. Wicklow. Of the 42 sightings, 16 were from Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park. It is obvious that these scenic areas attract large numbers of visitors, thus increasing the probability of lizards being observed. However it can be argued that the reason so many lizards are sighted here is the fact that an area like Glendalough offers a diverse range of unspoiled and suitable habitats for lizards and so the higher numbers observed relate to the fact that the area can support higher numbers.

Inland areas of Ireland generate fewer sightings yet it could be argued that volumes of people may not be as great here compared to coastal and mountain areas. The fact that sightings, albeit relatively few, have come from inland areas prove the lizard is found here and if more in depth surveying was carried out in these areas, there is no doubt that the numbers of lizards observed here would rise.

Public participation surveys lack the rigorous scientific application required to reach accurate and conclusive results. However, they prove a very useful tool in identifying areas of Ireland where lizards are likely to be found. Between 1990 and 2007, 732 lizard sightings have been reported. This averages out at about approximately 40 per annum. There is no doubt that many more people have seen a lizard and with our nationwide surveys becoming more frequent, more people will forward sightings to us.

Even allowing for survey bias, it is fairly acceptable at this stage to tentatively suggest that lizards favour bogland and coastal areas of Ireland, particularly along the western seaboard and to a lesser extent Wicklow and Wexford on the east coast. The next stage in learning more about common lizards is to carry out scientific sampling at a number of different locations reflecting different habitats. Such an experiment would require considerable financial and manpower resources but would certainly help to reach a high degree of certainty about the status of the common lizard in Ireland. Public participation surveys also need to be continued into the future and more effort and focus is needed for areas where lizard sightings are low or non-existent, such as Counties Laois and Westmeath.

One welcome outcome this year was the significant increase in sightings from Northern Ireland. 22 sightings, 10% of total, were received from all of the six counties. In the last survey of 2005, only Counties Antrim and Tyrone submitted sightings totalling just 11. This year extra effort was put into increasing awareness in Northern Ireland of the IWT'S survey and while the numbers are still low, at least a noticeable increase was achieved.

Approximately 20% of the lizard reports received in 2006 and 2007 were accompanied by a photograph. With more and more people carrying digital cameras



and camera phones, the likelihood is that increasing numbers of photographs will be submitted in the future. The photos used throughout this report were all submitted by members of the public in 2007. The photos are all mostly high quality and show the various colouration and patterns found on the common lizard. It has been suggested that lizard's colourations reflect their habitats and indeed photos show that lizards from grassland areas tend to be a greenish / yellow colour where those found in rocky areas tend to be brown/greyish in colour. This variation in colours is one aspect of the lizard's lifestyle worthy of future investigation.

With ever increasing pressure on Irish habitats becoming more evident, greater protection to our native fauna and flora must be afforded. The common lizard, *Lacerta vivipara*, is our only native reptile and should be recognised as a unique and special member of our native fauna. Ireland has a wide ranging though limited biodiversity compared to many other European countries, so the sole native representative of the reptile family should perhaps be given unique protection status under wildlife legislation.

## 6.0 Acknowledgements

Many thanks to National Parks and Wildlife for generously sponsoring the *Common Lizard Survey 2007*. Thanks to Billy Flynn, IWT, for his help in coordinating the project and also to Barbara Henderson, IWT, for all her support, input and help during the summer of 2007. IWT are extremely grateful to all the members of the public who provided us with such accurate and helpful information and without whom this project would not have been possible.

### **Author of *Common Lizard Survey 2007***

Seán Meehan is a recent Applied Environmental Science graduate from UCD. He is from Co. Sligo and has held a deep interest in the flora and fauna of Ireland from an early age. Seán chose to study Applied Environmental Science in UCD as it was taught in the context of an overall Agricultural Science degree.

As part of the degree programme, a period of relevant work experience is required. Seán worked with the Irish Wildlife Trust for three months during 2007, principally on running the day to day work involved with the *Common Lizard Survey 2007* and writing up this report. Seán would like to thank IWT for the excellent work experience opportunity and looks forward to working with them again in the near future.

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## **8.0 Appendices**

Appendix A – Online Lizard Sighting Form

**Online sighting form for:**

## NATIONAL *COMMON LIZARD* SURVEY OF IRELAND

(*Lacerta vivipara*)

Surveyors Name:
Address:
Telephone number:
Email:

### SIGHTING DETAILS:

Date:
County, locality (If rural, name of nearest town):
Grid reference:
GPS (if possible):
Elevation (approx.):

### WEATHER DETAILS:

Time of day:
Habitat details:
Habitat description:
Human impacts:

### LIZARD BEHAVIOUR:

Lizard behaviour (e.g. Basking, feeding, fleeing, hiding or resting):

### FEEDBACK:

Where did you find out about the National Common Lizard Survey of Ireland?:

**ON COMPLETION, PLEASE SEND ONLINE FORM TO THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESS:**

**[Lizards@iwt.ie](mailto:Lizards@iwt.ie)**

\* Please include, if possible, any photographic evidence of lizard sightings.