

Habitat preference of *Podarcis sicula* in agricultural landscapes (Central Italy)

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Podarcis sicula is a lacertid lizard widely distributed in Italy. In Tuscany, central Italy, *P. sicula* is quite common inside anthropised areas and, considering the species present in the region (*P. sicula*, *P. muralis* and *Lacerta bilineata*), it is the lacertid lizard most widespread inside agricultural habitats. This is partly due to biological characteristics such as high thermophily, that make this species particularly apt to live in open habitats. In spite of the numerous reports of its “ubiquitarian” presence, however, very little is known about *P. sicula* ecology in agro-environments. Our first aim was to understand how the species distributes in agricultural landscapes and, in particular, how distribution patterns change inside cultivated areas with different farming disturbance and structural features. We performed transecting activity in two intensively managed land uses, vineyards and cereal fields, both typical of Tuscan agricultural landscape. In the surveyed areas we also sampled epigeal arthropods to gain data on food availability.

P. sicula showed very different distribution patterns in the two kinds of surveyed areas. The clearest evidence we found was the difficulty in “using” cereals fields: lizards seem to avoid the exploited area, entering just the very first meters close to the uncultivated margins. On the contrary vineyards hosted more individuals, spread all through the area. Also in these areas, however, the distribution was not uniform and highest density was found in the marginal zones. Food availability did not show significant differences in the two land uses thus, probably, structural features were the principal causes of the registered patterns.