

OCELLATED LIZARD

SCIENTIFIC NAME: **Timon lepidus**

CONSERVATION STATUS: **Near Threatened**



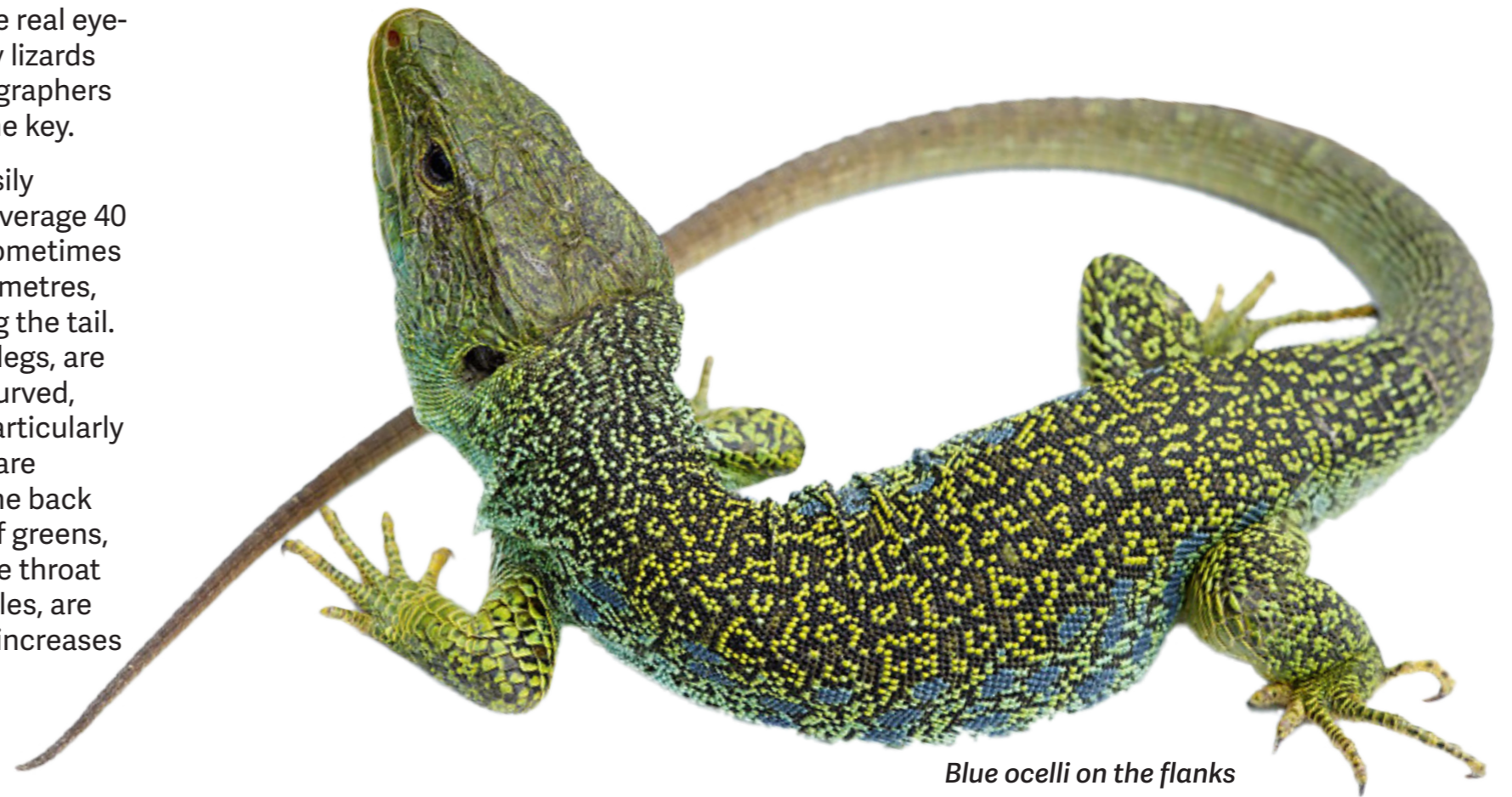
FACT FILE

- Largest Lizard in Europe
- Size 40 -60 cm
- It is a species in decline in France with destruction of habitat for both agriculture and tourism, along with climate change.
- Breeds in June or July
- Lays between 5 - 12 eggs
- Young are brown with white spots
- Feeds mainly on large insects
- Hibernation starts around October and takes place under ground

Being the biggest European Lacertid, the Ocellated Lizard is a highlight of the European fauna. These bold reptiles adorned with conspicuous ocelli pattern are real eye-catchers. However, these shy lizards can be a challenge for photographers sometimes, so, patience is the key.

Adults of this species are easily recognised by their size, on average 40 to 60 centimetres, but can sometimes reach an impressive 90 centimetres, two thirds of the length being the tail. The legs, especially the hind legs, are thick and strong, with long curved, pointed claws. Their sides, particularly during the breeding season, are decorated with blue spots, the back is patterned with a mixture of greens, browns, yellows and reds. The throat and belly, particularly the males, are yellow and their colouration increases with exposure to sunlight.

Their diet is varied, mainly large insects, beetles and spiders, on occasion they take bird eggs, baby birds, small mammals, other lizards and small snakes. Fruits and berries will be eaten when available.



Blue ocelli on the flanks



Note the brownish colouration with light dots of the juveniles.

Reproduction doesn't occur until late spring or early summer, often accompanied by violent fights between males, eggs, 5 to 12, being deposited between June and July in the ground. Incubation is about 3 months and it would be unusual to see the young, which are about 10 centimetres when first hatched, before September. Hibernation takes place from October until March or April under ground.

Found throughout the south of France, they prefer habitats that are open to the sun, rocky scrub, olive plantations, and grasslands, occasionally to be found in denser vegetation. They tend to occupy a fairly small territory, often in pairs and when disturbed they will quickly hide in a hole in the ground, under tree roots or under a large rock.