

Lizards of Levittown are here. How they got to Bucks County and what to do about them

JD MULLANE Bucks County Courier Times

We're now through mating season for Italian wall lizards, and a bumper crop of the small, greenish-gray creatures will continue to spread through Levittown.

Sightings are mentioned on neighborhood social media pages, and the reactions range from startled to "Awesome!"

While these non-native reptiles to Pennsylvania (they actually are native to Italy) multiply and move through Lower Bucks County, homeowners may wonder how they got here, do they pose health or safety threats, and what, if anything, can be done to get rid of the lizards which are commonly spotted darting through gardens and garages.

At least one homeowner reported that her house in the Quincy Hollow section was infested with lizards, and one even scurried across her while she lay in bed.

How did Italian wall lizards land in Levittown, Bucks County?

According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, which tracks the spread of invasive animals, the lizards were mistakenly introduced into Levittown in the late 1970s in the Quincy Hollow/Cobalt Ridge sections by a teenage boy.

He acquired several lizards and set them free in his parents' yard, believing they would naturally reduce the mosquito population (lizards love mosquitoes). It's not clear if it decreased mosquitoes, but the highly adaptive animals definitely increased their population in Levittown, where lizards now spotted in the Gates neighborhoods (Forsythia, Snowball and Red Rose) in Middletown, and as far as Indian Creek and Red Cedar Hill in neighboring Bristol Township.

Are Italian wall lizards of Levittown dangerous?



An Italian wall lizard in the garden of Cheryl Willis, of Cobalt Ridge, Levittown. Her home was invaded by the lizards in 2019.

No, and they aren't vectors for disease, said Andrew Lovett, branch manager for Newtown Termite & Pest Control, whose company has responded to lizard complaints in Levittown.

"They're not going to transmit anything to people," he said. "But you always want to avoid touching them, or any type of reptile, barehanded, unless you are a trained professional."

The only threat they pose is to Pennsylvania's native lizard population, which could be diminished as the non-natives invade and take over woodland habitats.

As for keeping them as pets, as some do, it's not a good idea.

"You really shouldn't take any creature from the wild and try to domesticate it," Lovett said.

What if they creep you out and you want them gone?



This product is sold online and at home improvement stores, but its effectiveness is iffy. Best way to deal with a lizard home invasion is through depriving Italian wall lizards of their favorite habitats, which is wherever insects thrive.

“There is no humane way to euthanize these guys, and euthanizing them might not be the answer,” Lovett said.

While there are products like “Lizard Block” and at least a half-dozen home remedies, from citronella to Pine Sol, Lovett said these are unreliable and may not work at all.

“You’re not going to get rid of them. The best you can do is mitigate them by making your house as uninviting as possible,” he said.

He tells clients the best way to reduce the number of lizards is through removing the habitats they love, like dense vegetation, firewood piles, and plastic storage sheds that are set near houses.

“Integrated property management is the best way to handle a lizard situation,” he said. “To survive, lizards need harborage. Remove woods piles, heavy vegetation, sheds along houses and general clutter. That’s where they thrive. Remove these, and they don’t thrive.”

What if the Levittown lizards invade my house?



An Italian wall lizard seeking smaller bugs to eat is frozen on a stick board trap in a house in the Cobalt Ridge section of ... [Show more](#) ✓
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Being proactive rather than reactive to a lizard home invasion is the best course.

Lovett advises a self-inspection of your house foundation with a phone cam to see if grading is correct or if there are holes where the creatures can scurry and hide. Do this prior to September and October, when the weather cools and lizards seek warm places to spend winter.

“If there are any glaring gaps in your foundation, get those remediated. Follow up with a contractor who can do the work,” he said.

If you spot them inside, he recommends sticky traps, which can be purchased online or at big box home improvement stores.

“Sticky traps are the No. 1 way to get rid of them. They get caught on them, and you can dispose them,” he said.

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