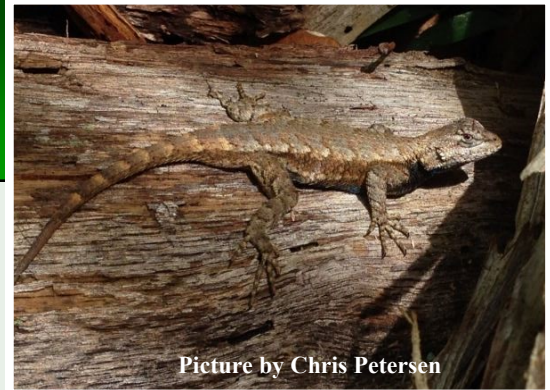


Eastern Fence Lizards and the Department of Defense



Picture by Chris Petersen

The Eastern Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus undulatus*) is the only lizard in eastern North America with keeled scales (exclusive of the Florida Scrub Lizard). Also called “rusty-back” or “fence swift,” this conspicuous animal gets its name from its tendency to bask and forage in the open on logs and wooden fences.

Description: Eastern Fence Lizards are medium-sized lizards with a total length range of 4 - 7.25 in (10 - 18.5 cm). The body is stout and is covered by heavily keeled, overlapping scales that have spiny tips. Color varies with age and sex. Females and young are gray to brown or yellowish brown with dark wavy crossbars; their bellies are white or light gray with small dark flecks that may have traces of light blue. Adult males are dark gray to dark brown or bronze, with dark crossbars that become obscure with age. The bellies of adult males have conspicuous dark metallic blue or blue-green patches that are edged in black.

Range: Eastern Fence Lizards are found across much of the eastern United States, from New York to Ohio southward to southern Alabama and central Florida. Populations previously referred to this species to the west of this range have been reclassified as different species.



Source: IUCN

Habitat: Eastern Fence Lizards prefer dry, open woodlands, abandoned farm buildings, rock outcrops, and piles of old lumber.

Behavior: Eastern Fence lizards bask in exposed places and move quickly when approached. If surprised on the ground, they dash to and climb the nearest tree, where they exhibit the squirrel-like behavior of moving to the opposite side of the tree from the pursuer. Prey includes a wide variety of insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. Males are strongly territorial, advertising their presence through head-

bobbing and push-ups. Females have home ranges that are smaller than male territories so that each male territory overlaps the home ranges of several females. Females generally lay a clutch of 3-16 eggs in the late spring, with hatching in late summer.

Military Interactions: This species commonly occurs on DoD properties in the eastern U.S. and is typically encountered both in military training and housing areas.

Conservation Status: The Eastern Fence Lizard has no federal conservation status. It is considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in three states at the periphery of its range. It has a NatureServe Raking of G5-Secure, and is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN Red list.

Threats/Planning Considerations: Threats to this species include destruction and fragmentation of habitats. A habitat management practice to benefit this species is to restore and/or maintain open forest (pine and/or mixed pine-hardwood) with abundant fallen logs. Prescribed fire can help maintain favorable conditions.

Occurrence on Military Lands	
Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 79 military properties (13 Air Force; 36 Army; 3 Marine Corps; and 27 Navy).	Up to an additional 78 military properties (25 Air Force; 20 Army; 6 Marine Corps and 27 Navy).

