

Defense on a Fence

Eastern Fence Lizard

(*Sceloporus undulatus*)

The eastern fence lizard, sometimes referred to as “spiny,” has pointed scales that are jagged and rough to the touch. They are the only species of the *Iguanidae* family found in Pennsylvania. Over 40 different species of the *Iguanidae* family live in North America. Most of them live in warm, dry areas.

The eastern fence lizard lays one clutch of three to 13 eggs. The eggs usually hatch sometime in July. When they hatch, eastern fence lizards measure about 2-inches long. Other than length and minor coloration differences, young eastern fence lizards look identical to adults. Adults measure about 4- to 7-inches long.

These lizards prefer to make their home in sunny areas of grassy or open woodlands and on dry, steep hillsides. Eastern fence lizards love to sit on logs, rock piles and fences while basking in the sun. These areas provide the perfect height for them to survey and protect their territory. As territorial animals, they defend their land by bobbing their head and opening their mouth. To threaten intruders, they will sometimes do push-ups with their two front legs while inflating their chest and throat.

The eastern fence lizard’s favorite food is beetles. That’s right. They like to sit still and wait for something yummy to come nearby to eat. They like to eat beetles, spiders and even snails. Once they see something to eat, they will move quickly to get it. Eastern fence lizards are diurnal, which means their hunting and activity occurs during the day.



A male eastern fence lizard displays blue patches near the base of its throat and belly.



Crossbars are more prominent on female eastern fence lizards.

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