

# THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

April 26-30, 2010



Southern prairie lizards are quite visible this time of year. Sometimes the species is known as the fence lizard, for it spends much of its time climbing. In the mesquite pastures and soapberry/hackberry pocket forests of the draws, the lizards climb the trees and shrubs. In town, they spend much of their time on the sides of houses and on fences, as well as on the trees.

Males have bright blue splotches along the sides of their stomach. When two males meet, they do “pushups” as a means to demonstrate dominance. Sometimes that is not enough, so they run at each other and briefly grapple, before one gives up the fight.

This is also the time of the year when “gravid” (pregnant) females can be found, their abdomens swollen. Females lay an average of 5 eggs in burrows underground, and by the first of June tiny babies can be found in every backyard in town. Only a few individuals of the species lives more than 18 months.

## **TEACHER AND STUDENT CHALLENGE;**

Map where you find a lizard. First determine a way to identify the lizard (sometimes they have a toe missing, or there is a specific healed wound on its tail. Then, record where you find it over succeeding days. The “home range” is different in different habitats. Report what you find to us!