

Field Report, April 15th to May 12th 2009 - France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal

by Frank Deschandol



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The goal of this trip was primarily to meet several species or subspecies which I had never yet succeeded in seeing hitherto. I left from April 15th to May 12th.

I have to confess that I am somewhat disappointed of this voyage, having again missed some... wanted for a long time. It should be said that the fact of being alone really does not help, and that tiredness accumulating, I was less and less voluntary to raise the stones...

I generally sought all the day from 9:00 /10h00 until 19:00 /20h00, but sometimes until 3:00 for the Amphibians.

I also visited some known sites, which enabled me to make pictures of species already met at the time of my preceding tours.

My program being very (= too much!) ambitious, I spent only one or two days on the sites, which is obviously not really ideal for thorough research.

The first part of the voyage in the Pyrenees and the north of Spain was rather disappointing, the temperatures were very brisk and the reptiles very rare. The snakes were quite simply invisible. During almost all the trip besides, those were relatively difficult to see because far from active, and I saw no snake crushed on the roads except towards end, at the beginning of May. This month is probably much more interesting for the reptiles there, but not necessarily for amphibians...

Total km : > 11.000 km

Main visited sites :



Of course, I thank all these people for their help : Roger Beudet, Matt Wilson, Wouter Beukema, Martti Niskanen, Stéphane Vitzthum, Yves Brunelli, Ruben Martinez, Daniel Escoriza, Luis García-Cardenete, Gaëtan Guiller, Thomas Bader, Jan Van Der Voort and especially Pierre-Yves Vaucher for his great reception in Switzerland.

NEAR REDON (France) :

Short passage between Rennes and Nantes in search of « *Triturus blasii* », hybrid between *Triturus marmoratus* and *Triturus cristatus*. Other species seen : *Podarcis muralis*, *Hyla arborea*, *Rana dalmatina*, *Lissotriton helveticus*, *Lissotriton vulgaris*, *Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*, *Triturus marmoratus*, *Triturus cristatus*, *Alytes obstetricans obstetricans*, *Bufo calamita*, *Bufo spinosus*, *Salamandra salamandra terrestris* and some *Pelophylax kl. esculentus*.



Triturus blasii, hybrid *Triturus marmoratus* x *Triturus cristatus*, male



Triturus blasii, hybrid *Triturus marmoratus* x *Triturus cristatus*, male



Triturus blasii, hybrid *Triturus marmoratus* x *Triturus cristatus*, male



Triturus blasii, hybrid *Triturus marmoratus* x *Triturus cristatus*, male



Triturus marmoratus



Alytes obstetricans obstetricans



Alytes obstetricans obstetricans



Bufo calamita

PYRENEES (Spain) : T° : 7-8°C PM ; 2-3°C night

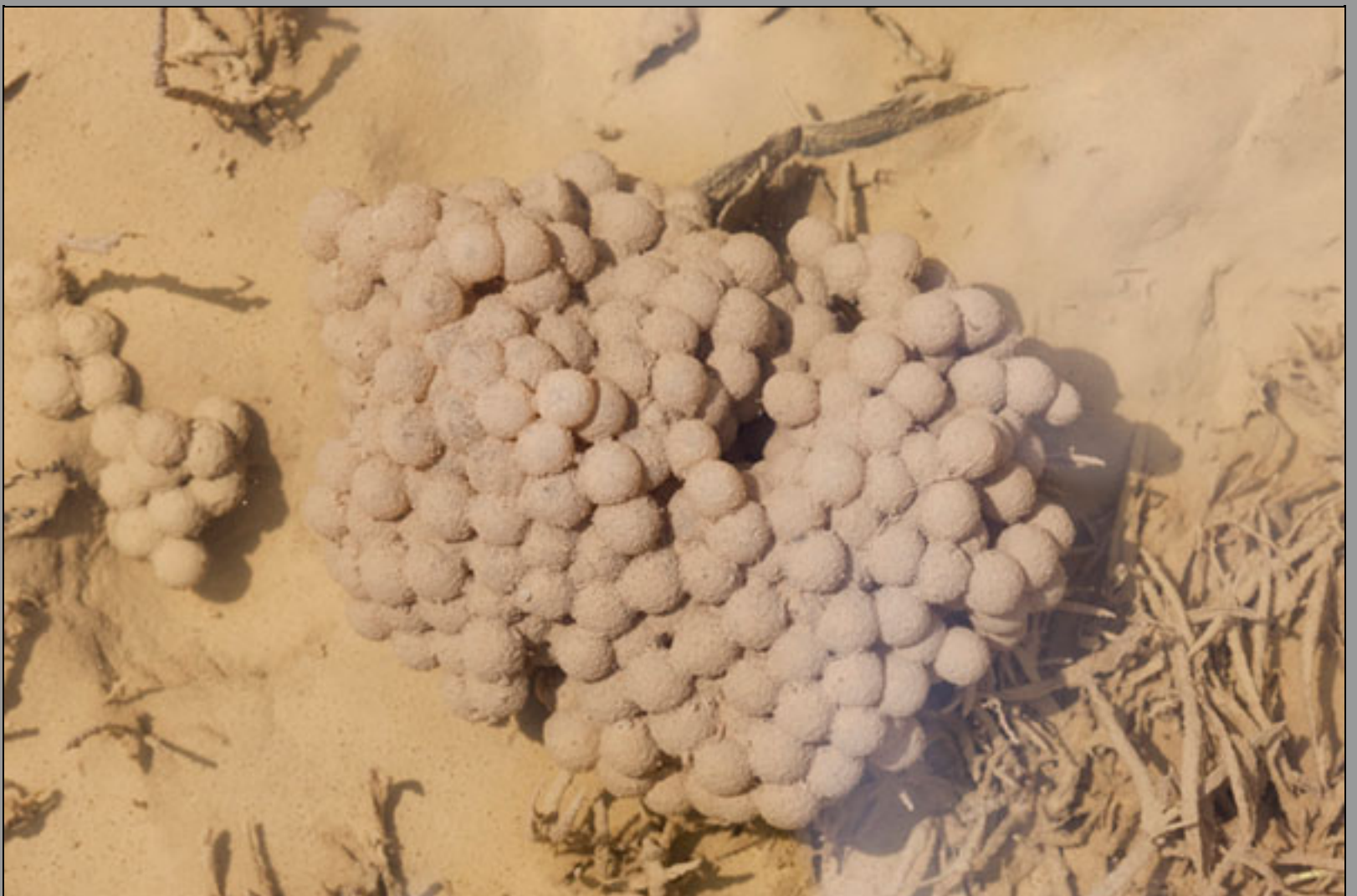
In a valley close to Jaca, I sought *Vipera aspis zinnikeri* without success. It should be said that time was hardly favorable because really too cold. Then, I looked for *Rana pyrenaica*, but unfortunately a thick layer of snow still partially recovered the mountain, I saw only a few *Rana temporaria* in temporary

puddle pools.

On the other side of the valley, songs of *Alytes obstetricans obstetricans* in spite of the cold, as well as large tadpoles in a feeding trough, a few *Lissotriton helveticus* and larvae, and a *Podarcis liolepis liolepis*.



Rana temporaria, laying



Rana temporaria, laying



Rana temporaria



Podarcis liolepis liolepis



Alytes obstetricans obstetricans

NORTHWESTERN SPAIN : T° : about 15°c day ; 2-4°c night

A prospecting in the area in order to find some ssp. of spanish newts. In a washing place, I succeeded in finding adults and larvae *Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni* and *Lissotriton helveticus alonsoi*. Also a *Pelophylax perezi*, many tadpoles of *Alytes obstetricans boscai*.

By a rainy night, I found on the road : *Salamandra salamandra bejarae* x *S. s. fastuosa*, *Bufo calamita*, *Bufo spinosus* and again *Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni*. In and around a pond in the center of a small village : *Triturus marmoratus*, *Hyla molleri*, *Alytes obstetricans boscai* and another *Salamandra salamandra bejarae* x *S. s. fastuosa*.

Some males *Triturus marmoratus* with an atrophied crest left already the pond. I was unable to find any female.

A little more to the West, in way, one *Anguis fragilis*.

Next, I reached a spot to find *Salamandra s. bernardezi*, the rainy weather enabled me to observe by night some nice and atypical Salamanders with a few *Bufo spinosus*.

On the way towards Peneda-Gerês, north of Portugal, I explored a sector next to Cional where I found *Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus*, *Lacerta schreiberi*, a young *Lissotriton boscai* and larvae, also four *Alytes obstetricans boscai* under a stone. Alas no *Discoglossus galganoi* nor *Salamandra s. gallaica* in spite of my rather thorough research.



Lissotriton helveticus alonsoi, female



Lissotriton helveticus alonsoi, male



Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni, male



Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni, male



Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni, female



Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni, female



Salamandra salamandra bejarae x *S. s. fastuosa*, female



Salamandra salamandra bejarae x *S. s. fastuosa*, reddish young



Bufo calamita



Triturus marmoratus, male



Triturus marmoratus, male



Triturus marmoratus, male



Hyla molleri



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Bufo calamita



Anguis fragilis



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus



Lacerta schreiberi, male



Lacerta schreiberi, male



Lissotriton boscai, juvenile



Alytes obstetricans boscai, a brave male with two different laying...



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Alytes obstetricans boscai, eggs



Alytes obstetricans boscai

PENEDA-GERES (Portugal) : T° : about 25°c day

Before arriving on the spot, I inspected a basin next to the road, where I found some a dozen of *Triturus marmoratus* and plenty of *Lissotriton boscai*. Arrived at Peneda-Gerês, very little thing in this place, one *Rana iberica*, one *Bufo spinosus*, one *Chioglossa lusitanica longipes* and some *Psammodromus algirus*.

A search for *Vipera latastei lastastei* in a good area did not give curiously any result, the weather being ideal. I found only 3 *Anguis fragilis*, *Lacerta schreiberi*, and *Podarcis guadarramae lusitanica*. I went to the north, Spanish side, in order to seek *Vipera seoanei cantabrica*. I found only one in spite of, once again, a favorable weather. I continued to seek there, while finding : *Timon lepidus ibericus*, again *Alytes obstetricans boscai*, *Podarcis bocagei*, *Podarcis guadarramae lusitanica* and *Lacerta schreiberi*.



Triturus marmoratus, male



Triturus marmoratus, male



Triturus marmoratus, female



Lissotriton boscai, male



Lissotriton boscai, female



Lissotriton boscai, male



Rana iberica



Chioglossa lusitanica longipes



Chioglossa lusitanica longipes



Timon lepidus ibericus



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Alytes obstetricans boscai



Podarcis bocagei



Podarcis bocagei



Vipera seoanei cantabrica, melanistic



Vipera seoanei cantabrica, melanistic

SIERRA DE GREDOS (Spain) : T° : 6°c night

I went thereafter in the Sierra de Gredos, initially in low valley very close to Rio Tiétar, a great place for herping. Hardly arrived, I found a large *Rhinechis scalaris* under a log. Unfortunately this one escaped before I finalize my photos ! I also met *Psammodromus algirus*, several *Natrix maura*, one *Pelobates*

cultripes, *Pelophylax perezi*, both *Hyla meridionalis* and *Hyla molleri* which live in the same habitat.

Also *Mauremys leprosa* at this place.

In the night by seeking amphibians in the Rio, I had the great surprise suddenly to see emerging from water a splendid Otter (*Lutra lutra*) to a few meters of me. Dazzled by my torch, it did not see me, did not smell me, seeking fishes, the head under water... it approached some seconds very close to my boot, before dipping back and to disappear in the night ; I was really glad !

Elsewhere, in a feeding trough, plenty of *Lissotriton boscai* and larvae.

I was going then in the mountains to look for the famous *Salamandra salamandra almanzoris*.

In spite of snow everywhere, still very important at that time of the year, I was happy to find two Salamanders. In way some *Iberolacerta cyreni castiliana*, no more.

While going back from “La Plataforma”, I avoided a *Coronella girondica* immobile on the road. An attempt for *Vipera latastei* the following day in the morning did not give any result except *Lacerta schreiberi*, always omnipresent. But a strong wind blew that day.

On the road leading to Monfragüe, I found a *Pelobates cultripes* and a short stop at embalse de Navalcan, enabled me to observe two big *Timon lepidus lepidus*, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Bufo calamita* and *Hyla meridionalis*.



Rhinechis scalaris



Psammodromus algirus



Natrix maura



Pelobates cultripes



Pelophylax perezi



Hyla meridionalis



Mauremys leprosa



Iberolacerta cyreni castiliana



Salamandra salamandra almanzoris



Salamandra salamandra almanzoris



Salamandra salamandra almanzoris



Pelobates cultripes



Bufo calamita



Hyla meridionalis

MONFRAGUE (Spain) : T° : about 25°c day

In Monfragüe, I sought mainly *Salamandra salamandra bejarae*, but all was really too dry to find some. I however succeeded in locating larvae in a fountain.

Later, I moved a few hundreds of *Bufo calamita* tadpoles which were perishing in their almost dry water puddle pool. The other found species were : *Bufo spinosus*, *Pelophylax perezi*, *Blanus cinereus*, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Mauremys leprosa*, *Lissotriton boscai* at several places, *Timon lepidus lepidus*, two *Pleurodeles waltl* in a small river, and only tadpoles of *Alytes cisternasii*. Unfortunately I did not find any adult. Same with *Triturus pygmaeus*, impossible to find neither in water nor on dry land. Also *Psammodromus occidentalis* towards Cáceres, but always discreet and difficult to photograph.



huge female of *Bufo spinosus*



Bufo spinosus, reddish



Salamandra salamandra bejarae, larva



Pelophylax perezi



Mauremys leprosa, juvenile



Blanus cinereus



Pleurodeles waltl



Pleurodeles waltl



Pleurodeles waltl

NORTH OF SEVILLA (Spain) :

I went there especially to see ***Salamandra salamandra morenica***. But there, all was very dry too. I saw only two very young salamanders hidden under stones. The adults were buried probably further in the ground. At the same place, I saw finally two ***Discoglossus galganoi galganoi***.



Salamandra salamandra morenica



Salamandra salamandra morenica



Discoglossus galganoi



Discoglossus galganoi

DONANA (Spain) : T° : <10°C night ; 12-14°C day

Very windy when I was there, and it is probably the reason of the few animals discovered. And the day was very cloudy the last day. I saw with great difficulties 3 or 4 *Podarcis carbonelli*, very wild, extremely difficult to approach even at El Acebuche... So I made only one picture of that species. I missed unfortunately a big *Malpolon monspessulanus*, too fast for me.

I saw *Tarentola mauritanica*, plenty of *Psammodromus algirus*, *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*, and also a sub-adult of *Chalcides bedriagae cobosi*. I also looked for *Vipera latastei gaditana* in the dunes but without success for the third consecutive year ! Finally, near Huelva, I found two *Chamaeleo chamaeleon*.



Acanthodactylus erythrurus, female



Acanthodactylus erythrurus, female



Tarentola mauritanica



Podarcis carbonelli



Chalcides bedriagae cobosi, sub adult



Chamaeleo chamaeleon



Chamaeleo chamaeleon



Anacridium aegyptium

Further North, I explored the embalse de Campofrio, where I found *Psammodromus algirus*, *Blanus cinereus*, and several *Chalcides bedriagae cobosi*.



Blanus mariae



Blanus mariae



Blanus mariae



Psammodromus algirus, male



Chalcides bedriagae cobosi



Chalcides bedriagae cobosi



Chalcides bedriagae cobosi



Serapias parviflora

SERRA DE MONCHIQUE (Portugal) : T° : about 15°c PM

A little more than one day spent to locate potential area for *Salamandra salamandra crespai*. Weather was very cloudy but not enough wet to be able to meet Salamanders. I just found two *Blanus mariae* (?) under the same stone and also a young *Timon lepidus lepidus*. Also *Lacerta schreiberi*, from which morphology seemed to be somewhat different from northern populations. In the night, a young *Pelobates cultripes* with still its vestige of tail... That's all.



Lacerta schreiberi, male



Timon lepidus



Pelobates cultripes



Serapias cordigera

The next visited site was La Saucedá. I hoped to find ***Salamandra salamandra longirostris***. But no rain... so no Salamander. Forgetting my GPS in the car, I was unable to find an interesting laguna and I was too tired to make another hike after that. But I saw there several ***Podarcis vaucheri***.



Podarcis vaucheri



Podarcis vaucheri



Podarcis vaucheri



Podarcis vaucheri

LORCA (Spain) : T° : 13-20°C PM the first day, 25°C PM the next day ; clouds, sun, strong rainstorm

I went then in southeastern Spain, above all to find *Testudo graeca*. Sadly, I spent two days in that place, and strangely, I did not find any turtle.

Nevertheless, I found : *Malpolon monspessulanus*, *Hemidactylus turcicus*, *Tarentola mauritanica*,

Blanus cinereus, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Psammodromus edwardsianus*, *Pelophylax perezi*, *Podarcis hispanica* and I saw also *Timon lepidus nevadensis*... unfortunately for my fingers !!



Malpolon monspesulanus



Malpolon monspesulanus



Psammodromus edwardsianus



Blanus cinereus



Hemidactylus turcicus



Hemidactylus turcicus



Timon lepidus nevadensis, male, total size 53 cm



Timon lepidus nevadensis, male



Timon lepidus nevadensis, male



Timon lepidus nevadensis, male



Timon lepidus nevadensis, male

A short video of the « beast » (about 11 Mo, you need the last Quicktime or iTunes or VLC...) :

<http://www.deschandol-sabine.com/film/nevad.m4v>



Chrysis sp.

SIERRA DE CAZORLA (Spain) :

Only one day here to find *Alytes dickhilleni* and to try to find *Algyroides marchi*, two endemic species of the Sierra. Already knowing the site to be gone there in 2007, I was going right to an old swimming pool (without water) next to a road. I found once again two Alytes inside. On the other hand, I did not find *Algyroides*, seeking too little; it should be said that it was the Weekend of May 1st and that the tourists flowed of everywhere. I left quickly the area without regret.



Alytes dickhilleni



Alytes dickhilleni



Blanus cinereus

ALTO TAJO AND SURROUNDING (Spain) : T° : 22-23°C PM ; 3°C night

On the road leading to the park of Alto Tajo Natural Park (east of Madrid), I found a nice *Natrix natrix astreptophora* and some *Podarcis liolepis liolepis* (?). Arrived in the park at the end of the afternoon, I prospected and found again one *Podarcis liolepis liolepis* and several *Alytes obtetricans pertinax*. But, as usual, no *Vipera latastei latastei* there, very frustrating ! My known spot for *Discoglossus galganoi jeanneae*, was completely messed up : an extremely strong water flows, so I didn't find that species.

The following day, in a small valley apart from the park : *Timon lepidus lepidus*, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Bufo spinosus*, several *Natrix maura*, *Pelophylax perezi*, *Alytes obtetricans pertinax* with eggs. At Zaida lagoon about 5°C by night, I observed and heard hundreds of *Bufo calamita* and also *Pelodytes sp. nov.*. The next day with *Timon lepidus lepidus*, *Natrix maura* and five *Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae*.



Podarcis liolepis liolepis



Natrix natrix astreptophora, always hard to make good pictures with Natrix !



Natrix natrix astreptophora



Natrix natrix astreptophora



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Podarcis liolepis liolepis



Timon lepidus, female



Natrix maura



Natrix maura



Psammodromus algirus



Timon lepidus, male



Alytes obstetricans pertinax



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae



Natrix maura



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Bufo calamita



Pelodytes sp. nov



Pelodytes sp. nov

PYRENEES (Spain-France) :

I again visited the Pyrenees with the idea to find ***Rana pyrenaica*** finally, hoping that all snow had melted 3 weeks after my first coming. Unfortunately the access road was barred and I had to make a great detour to arrive on the spot. However impossible to find this frog, with the snow melts, the torrents had an important flow and a turbid water. I didn't even succeed in locating only one ***Calotriton asper***. Only some ***Podarcis muralis*** next to a torrent.

Frustrated, I decided to make a fast jump in Iraty not far from there. Before arriving, I made some pictures of ***Bufo spinosus***, a lot of, on a small road. A few were already crushed...

The next morning, I sought actively ***Vipera seoanei seoanei***, perfect weather, sun with 22-23°C... but no luck, I didn't see any snake. But most of the thorny bushes where the snakes hid had been probably ripped off last year, that didn't help.

Still no luck about ***Rana pyrenaica***, so I gave up, amen..... Some ***Zootoca vivipara lousilantzi*** were nevertheless present.

The following day, not so far from Iraty, on the way, I went through on a slope at the edge of a road, which finally appeared very profitable : ***Lacerta bilineata***, two ***Natrix natrix helvetica*** together under the same log : a large and very aggressive female and a smaller male. Crushed on the road : ***Anguis fragilis*** and an amazing black ***Natrix natrix helvetica***...

I was going to the pass of La Pierre St Martin in order to try to get pictures of melanic ***Podarcis muralis***, which I had located a few years ago. But I found only standard forms, snow was still quite present and the rare non snow-covered walls were relatively rare.



Podarcis muralis



Podarcis muralis



Podarcis muralis



Bufo spinosus



Bufo spinosus



Bufo spinosus



Bufo spinosus



Zootoca vivipara lousiantzi



Natrix natrix helvetica, female...



Natrix natrix helvetica, ... and the male



Podarcis muralis



Lacerta bilineata, male



Lacerta bilineata, male



Lacerta bilineata, small female



Lacerta bilineata, female



Lacerta bilineata, female



D.O.R. *Natrix natrix helvetica*, melanic



D.O.R. *Natrix natrix helvetica*, melanic

MONT VENTOUX (France) :

I made a short at Mont Ventoux while going up towards north, but without *Vipera ursinii*, I sought too little in the end of afternoon and the next morning an extremely strong wind blew. Then, I profited to seek some scorpions. I saw however *Lacerta bilineata*, *Podarcis muralis*, *Bufo spinosus* and I heard in



Euscorpius flavicaudis



Euscorpius concinnus

SWITZERLAND :

A few days in Switzerland searching *Natrix tessellata* next to the Lac Léman. I located immediately a large female on a bank, but the rocks being slipping... I however succeeded in a few moments later

finding another adult and at least 7 very young snakes, all more or less in water.

A visit close to Bex for ***Salamandra atra*** did not give any result : once again the snow was present at this time and recovered almost all the place.

Near Geneva, I could see all these species : ***Lacerta agilis agilis***, ***Vipera aspis aspis***, ***Podarcis muralis***, ***Lacerta bilineata***, ***Hierophis viridiflavus***, ***Emys orbicularis orbicularis***, ***Zamenis longissimus***, ***Pelophylax ridibundus***, ***Triturus carnifex***, ***Alytes obstetricans obstetricans***, ***Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris***.



Natrix tessellata



Natrix tessellata, young



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Vipera aspis aspis



Zamenis longissimus



Zamenis longissimus



Hierophis viridiflavus



Hierophis viridiflavus



Pelophylax ridibundus



Pelophylax ridibundus



Triturus carnifex



Triturus carnifex



Triturus carnifex



Triturus carnifex



Triturus carnifex



Alytes obstetricans obstetricans

NEAR PONTARLIER (France) :

Last visited site, I went in a place where it is possible to observe melanic *Vipera berus*. After one hour, in spite of an unfavourable time (very windy) I found a nice specimen and also a *Rana dalmatina*. I left to Le Havre the same day.



Vipera berus, melanistic



Vipera berus, melanistic

Reptiles (37) :

Chamaeleo chamaeleon
Blanus cinereus
Blanus mariae
Acanthodactylus erythrurus
Tarentola mauritanica
Hemidactylus turcicus
Podarcis bocagei
Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus
Podarcis hispanica
Podarcis muralis
Podarcis liolepis liolepis
Podarcis vaucheri
Podarcis carbonelli
Iberolacerta cyreni castiliana
Lacerta bilineata
Lacerta schreiberi
Lacerta agilis agilis
Psammodromus algirus
Psammodromus occidentalis
Psammodromus edwardsianus
Zootoca vivipara louislantzi
Timon lepidus ibericus
Timon lepidus lepidus
Timon nevadensis

Anguis fragilis
Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae
Chalcides bedriagae cobosi
Rhinechis scalaris
Zamenis longissimus
Natrix maura
Natrix natrix helvetica
Natrix natrix astreptophora
Natrix tessellata
Hierophis viridiflavus
Malpolon monspessulanus
Vipera seoanei cantabrica
Vipera aspis aspis
Vipera berus berus
Mauremys leprosa
Emys orbicularis orbicularis

Amphibians (26) :

Triturus carnifex
Triturus blasii
Triturus cristatus
Triturus marmoratus
Lissotriton helveticus helveticus
Lissotriton helveticus alonsoi
Lissotriton boscai
Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris
Ichthyosaura alpestris cyreni
Hyla arborea
Hyla molleri
Hyla meridionalis
Alytes obstetricans obstetricans
Alytes obstetricans boscai
Alytes obstetricans pertinax
Alytes dickhilleni
Bufo calamita
Bufo spinosus
Discoglossus galganoi galganoi
Pelobates cultripes
Pelodytes sp. nov
Pleurodeles waltl
Salamandra salamandra terrestris
Salamandra salamandra morenica
Salamandra salamandra bejarae (only larvae)
Salamandra salamandra almanzoris
Salamandra salamandra bernardezi
Salamandra salamandra bejarae x Salamandra salamandra fastuosa
Chioglossa lusitanica longipes
Pelophylax kl. esculentus
Pelophylax ridibundus
Rana temporaria
Rana iberica

Rana dalmatina
Pelophylax perezi

Total = 63 spp.