

Field Report, August 2011 - Spain, Portugal, France

by Frank Deschandol



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This (spanish) summer trip was almost dedicated to visit Barcelona with some friends for 12 days, so no herp there but I made a short circuit by car afterwards in the peninsula, along with my cousin Emmanuel. Our main goal was the couple of Podarcis sspp. that I had never seen before, living on 2 small islands not so far from the coast of Spain and Portugal. But of course we also took a look at a few known places on the way... Thanks to Bobby Bok, David Donaire, Matthieu Berroneau, Armando Caldas and Emmanuel Cacheleux for his great help in the field.

Hot spots (about 6000 km) :



Peñíscola (Spain) :

Waiting 4 days there for the next boat to the Columbretes island, we spent our days on the beach, looking in the night for some *Emys orbicularis fritzjuergenobsti* in the ditches sewer of the town... Not really easy and rather a smelly work ! We could only catch a few *Mauremys leprosa* and unfortunately a lot of very shy *Trachemys scripta elegans* were seen everywhere in the area. *Emys* stayed uncatchable with a single net. But lucky, we managed to see 2 turtles basking in a sunny morning.



Emys orbicularis fritzjuergenobsti



same



other



large *Mauremys leprosa*





young

Columbretes Island (Spain) :

Early on Sunday morning, we left Peñíscola on the "SuperBonanza" boat, reaching the Columbretes island 3 hours later. Once arrived at the anchoring place, we were informed that too many people are already on the island... Over quota for the natural reserve ! Then, we couldn't believe a such mess : a lottery drawing was made with our ticket to determine who stay on the boat (and it wasn't a joke) !! Fortunately winner, we were allowed to disembark on the island by this very warm day. I found quickly the first *Podarcis liolepis atratus* running under a small bush. But difficult to make good pictures of the animals. We ended the cruise by a very nice swim amongst the Eleonora's Falcons (*Falco eleonora*) flying above our heads.



Golondrina SuperBonanza



Beautiful island



Podarcis liolepis atratus, subadult



female adult



same



male



same

Peña de Francia (Spain) :

Third attempt on that place to find the famous and dreamlike *Iberolacerta martinezricai*... Seeking for about 6 hours, in the morning and in the afternoon. Nothing. I went back from the top to give up while Emmanuel had a lunch and stayed down, next to the car. By SMS, I was immediately informed that Emmanuel saw a lizard crossing the path. First, I rather think about a *L. schreiberi* but the lizard was basking on a stone and unbelievably... a true *Iberolacerta* subadult :P ! In a small fountainhead, a few big larvae of *Salamandra salamandra bejarae*.



Iberolacerta martinezricai, subadult



same



Salamandra salamandra bejarae



Always a lot of *Capra pyrenaica* here (young)

Peniche/Berlengas Archipelago (Portugal) :

Next, was the Berlengas islands, a shorter way by boat of only one hour. But with a such rough sea during our crossing, it took a while to reach the achipelago, a large part of the passengers disgorging overboard. There, the density of the endemic lizard *Podarcis carbonelli berlengensis* is really awesome. Frankly opposite to Peniche, on the mainland, where we hardly could see 3 young *Podarcis sp.* (*carbonelli carbonelli* ?).



Here we go...



Biotope



Podarcis carbonelli berlengensis, young



female eating something...



other



other



male



other



other



other



Hard work at Peniche :)



Emmanuel just awake, but ready



Larus michahellis



Lisbon (Portugal) :

A fast incursion into Lisboa harbour, seeking an exogenous species from Madeira : *Teira dugesii*. Amazingly very shy, difficult to approach within an acceptable distance, even with a 300 mm lens, but after 2 hours of intense shooting, I could get about what I wanted.



Teira dugesii



other



other



others



other



other

Serra da Estrela (Portugal) :

I decided to visit this year again Serra da Estrela while heading north towards our next stop, Burgos. At Torre, cold night at about 7-8°C... And in the next day, the strong wind didn't help, only a very few *Iberolacerta monticola monticola* came out. But I could find more lizards under stones. Also some *Pelophylax perezi* here.



Nice starry night on the top of Torre



Iberolacerta monticola monticola



other



other



other



baby

Burgos (Spain) :

On the place in the late afternoon, I checked in a hurry a famous spot suitable for *Vipera latastei latastei*. It took me less than 10 mn to find a pregnant female, hidden partly under a rock. A 2nd snake was found a few minutes later, along with a nice *Natrix maura*.



Vipera latastei latastei



same



other



same



Natrix maura



Eggs of *Timon lepidus* or *Lacerta bilineata* ?

Bordeaux (France) :

Last stop to hunt the big American Bullfrog, *Lithobates catesbeianus* near Bordeaux. In a deep pond, hundreds of these frogs were jumping everywhere, but shy as hell. We were unable to catch any animal during all the day. Stunning. In the night, with a better feeling, I caught a dozen of young frogs by hands but not enough skillful to catch the largest ones. The strange calls seemed to us like some faraway cows. Then, I switched to another spot not so far from the first one. A few huge Bullfrogs were immobile on the bank, and finally we could capture a nice specimen with our net. Other species seen : *Pelophylax ridibundus* or *kl. grafi*.



Pelophylax sp. (ridibundus or kl. grafi ?)



Lithobates catesbeianus



other



other



other, huge



same



same



The trophy...

Epilogue : This trip allowed me to see the last species of the Iberian peninsula (I. martinezricai) and added two new insular subspecies to my twitch list. Next step will be a great herp into the Balearic, to close, temporary I hope, the spanish herping and to focus on other countries in Europe.

Reptiles (13) :

Emys orbicularis fritzjuergenobsti
Mauremys leprosa
Trachemys scripta elegans
Iberolacerta monticola monticola
Iberolacerta martinezricai
Podarcis muralis
Podarcis liolepis atratus
Podarcis sp. (carbonelli carbonelli ?)
Podarcis carbonelli berlengensis
Timon lepidus lepidus
Teira dugesii
Tarentola mauritanica
Natrix maura
Vipera latastei latastei

Amphibians (4) :

Salamandra salamandra bejarae

Lithobates catesbeianus

Pelophylax perezii

Pelophylax sp.

Total : 17 spp.