

Field Photo Report, late June/July 2015 - Corsica (France), South France, Spain, Portugal

by Frank Deschandol



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*Helping my friend Florent to build his garden shed roof, I had the opportunity to visit once again the great island of Corsica for 2 weeks from the 2nd part of June. Only a few days were spent to search for reptiles and amphibians but great time there. Then I went to southern France looking for a true population of *Pelophylax kl. grafi* and the Spanish part was dedicated to find the latest subspecies of lizards I've ever seen yet. The weather was really hot (dog days) and not suitable for snakes at all, but in whatever way, only lizards were my main focus during this trip.*

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(Pics from iPhone are used mainly for landscapes)



Map of the trip

***** CORSICA *****



iPhone shot of *Testudo hermanni*, in situ



Emys orbicularis lanzai, 2 were caught at the same place



Podarcis siculus campestris



Podarcis tiliguerta





male



same, fisheye style



Salamandra corsica, subadult



other, young





other



Florent testing his brand new photo equipment



Hyla sarda



same





getting forces in between... © Florent Bénard



The invasive *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*, this palm tree killer from Asia is a pest in Corsica



mimic butterfly *Pyropteron chrysidiformis*

***** SOUTH FRANCE*****

Last February I got no luck in finding *Pelophylax kl. grafi* at a pond where only *grafi* occurs. The weather was too bad. So I tried again... But the few frogs living in that pond were very shy and impossible to catch by day. But after dusk, I managed to catch some.



Pelophylax kl. grafi



other



other



Saga pedo, huge partenogenetic grasshopper



same

***** SPAIN*****

First stop was a place to find some *Psammodromus hispanicus* as I wanted to make more pictures. Always difficult to see, I failed in catching the first one. After one hour, while disappointed, I went back to the car giving up, and one lizard was standing at 2 meters from the car... waiting for me :)



Psammodromus hispanicus

Then I went to Sierra de la Demanda near Burgos to find one newt described by some authors as a subspecies (which is probably more an ecotype). After a crazy drive in the mountains, I reached the lake where *Lissotriton helveticus* "*punctillatus*" occurs. A quick look by day allowed me to see only two *Bufo spinosus* in the water and a lot of fish. I was expecting to see at least a single newt by night but it seems that this lake is now overcrowded by thousand rainbow trouts, probably introduced by a Spanish idiot. To my opinion, the *Lissotriton* are probably extinct now or the few remaining newts outside the water have no suitable place to breed anymore henceforth...



Pozo Negro lagoon.. Sadly the kingdom of fish now

Then, I visited Liebana valley as I heard about a new subspecies of *Podarcis guadarramae* living there...
The lizards were actually weird looking a little bit like *P. liolepis*.



Podarcis guadarramae (undescribed ssp.)



other



other



other



other



other



other



other, yawning one :)



other

Then I went to a known place for *Vipera latastei* in the surroundings of Burgos. Too hot so no snake was found. Next was Picos de Europa, looking for the black striped morph of *Vipera seoanei seoanei*, but the weather was really bad. So I decided to visit one spot where some peculiar *Salamandra* can be found, and it was a good idea...



Beautiful scenery but without any vipers (*seoanei*)...



...



...



Chioglossa lusitanica longipes



Salamandra salamandra bernardezi



other



other



other



other



other



other



other



other



other



other



other, baby

Next destination was the mountains nearby León. There, a new subspecies of *Iberolacerta* was newly described : *Iberolacerta monticola astur*. It was a challenge to find this lizard because of his habitat, the mountains are not that much stony like where live most of *Iberolacerta monticola*. And also because some of my friends already failed in finding adults. Furthermore, no road could easilly lead to a suitable place by car. It took a while before seeing any lizard because of the heat, even high in the mountains. In the late afternoon, I managed to see and to take pictures of a few specimens, but what I thought to be *Iberolacerta* turned out to be only *P. muralis* which is rather common everywhere. I spent 3 more days, hiking for hours in the steep mountains, early in the morning and late in the evening, checking many rocky slopes from 1500 to 1700m asl... without success. Once again I gave up when I saw a nice (unlikely) place on my way back, at lower elevation though. I decided to have a look... And the luck was back when I saw my first green male. I could photograph many other lizards the next day.. Job done !



seems a good place for Ibero but it's not...



no more here :(



Podarcis muralis



other



single *muralis* found at the top of a mountain (1680m asl)





Iberolacerta monticola astur, eating



same



other one, just before....



... flying away !



other



other



other



other



subadult



young



old schist mine where I found lots of nice fossils...along with *P. muralis* and *P. bocagei*



fern leaf



my best firework for the french national celebration on 14th of July...

Next stop was a lagoon where I could find some *Iberolacerta galani*, as I also wanted to get more pictures of this species. At this high place (1700m asl) I found a young *Coronella austriaca* and it was a big surprise to see my first ever young *Timon lepidus*, as I went several times on this place without seeing any.



Iberolacerta galani



other



other



other



other



shy male



other



other



other



other



Coronella austriaca acutirostris, young

***** PORTUGAL *****

I looked for *Vipera seoanei cantabrica* in Peneda Gerês, but still no luck with this species...



Lacerta schreiberi, female



Rhinechis scalaris found by night on road

***** SPAIN*****

Back to Spain, in Galicia, for probably the main goal of this trip. On Sálvora island lives an endemic ssp. of *Timon lepidus* ; the spp. *oteroorum*. In spite of research on internet, I couldn't find any pic of this lizard and about the differences compared to the nominal ssp. Fortunately, as a professional photographer, I was invited on this island by the national park to take pictures of the animal. Thus, my stay was free, just like the speed boat to reach the place. The lizard is rather abundant though some of them were very shy. I was allowed to go everywhere, but some yellow-legged Gulls were really annoying due to the breeding season, so it was better to avoid some parts of the island !



let's go with the crazy boatman !



with a 300 horsepower motor, only 10 mn were sufficient to reach the island... a little bit wet !



landscapes on Sálvora...



...



...



the small harbor



hike with angry birds above... © Maria P.



I wanna shit on you ! (Was lucky enough to avoid this)



Maria heading towards our home... a nice castle !



...



a true paradise from the room



the most common lizard on the island was *Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus*



other



other



other



other



other



other



spotting the first *Timon lepidus oteroorum* in the old abandoned village © Maria P.



so here it is : *Timon lepidus oteroorum*



same



other



same



other



other



same, not shy at all



same



other



other, male



subadult

On the way back, I stopped at another nice site on the coastline where *Podarcis pityusensis* is introduced. The place, overcrowded into the week-end though, was perfect to photograph those lizards which were much more shy some years ago. Probably thanks to the tourists, most likely more and more to visit the place.



Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis



other



other



the most beautiful male I've ever seen... even my Canon lens is still shocked :)



same

Once again, I made a short visit at Burgos trying to find any *Vipera latastei*. Still very hot, and no snake by night while roaming on roads. But fortunately, this time I could find this nice specimen in the late afternoon.



© frank deschandol

Vipera latastei



© frank deschandol

same



same

***** FRANCE*****

At last, a final stop to photograph *Xenopus laevis*, an invasive species... It seemed hard to catch any frog because ponds were either completely dry or too deep to use a net. So I tried to put my trap in the water (fortunately I always have a trap in my car), with some sardines in oil as bait. After 2 hours, 5 frogs were found inside the trap...



"fishing", waiting, eating... then...



nice catch :)



the beast



same



other



For some years I didn't visited Spain and I was really happy to herp once again in this country, searching for new animals. I was especially pleased to reach all my goals, which definitely complete my sight of all species and subspecies of reptiles and amphibians from Spain (mainland + islands except Canary islands, and 2 sspp. of *Podarcis lilfordi* in the Balearic, difficult to reach). Hoping soon would be more species or subspecies to photograph in that country :)

Since I focused only on a few species/subspecies, no herp list would be given into this field report ; many more known species were observed but not photographed.