

# Field Report, July 2008 - Spain, France, Switzerland, Italy

by Frank Deschandol



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*Short trip of about one week at the end of July 2008. This trip was especially dedicated to find Calotriton arnoldi in Spain, and to make some new pictures of Salamandra atra in Switzerland and Salamandra lanzai in Italy.*

*I looked also for insects like butterflies etc., thus, it was difficult to see a lot of species of other reptiles and amphibians... All the more so that the sun was practically shining every time with too warm temperatures in the daytime.*

*As usual, I was alone, autonomous, sleeping inside my car, and avoiding as much as possible the touristic places with a lot of people (very difficult everywhere in July).*

First day, at Montseny, the landscape was already rather dry with only a few brooks with water in the interesting area. I started to examine each brooks in the dark and in the third, I found quickly 2 males of *Calotriton arnoldi* and a young one.



*Calotriton arnoldi*





same



other





a juvenile

Then, I drove back towards South East of France. The first reptile was a very young *Anguis fragilis* near Manosque and one *Podarcis muralis*, but I was there for *Hyles nicaea*, a rare Sphingidae, so no more herp. (In the night with a mercury vapor lamp, I caught the latter with *Deilephila porcellus*, a very big female of *Laothoe populi*, *Marumba quercus* and *Sphinx maurorum*).



young *Anguis fragilis*





*Polyphylla fullo*, male



caterpillar, final instar of *Hyles euphorbiae*

Next stop to the Mont Viso, onto Italian side. After sundown, I climbed the mountain and inspected a small area near a path. Here, I found 6 *Salamandra lanzai* males and females ; I stopped my nocturnal prospecting to reach the Switzerland early the next day.





*Salamandra lanzai*



same





another one crushed on the path

Short hike in the mountains, in the Martigny region, always above all for insects but nevertheless with 3 black *Vipera aspis atra* and 2 *Anguis fragilis*.



*Vipera aspis atra*





same



*Anguis fragilis*





other female



*Aporia crataegi*

At a famous place close to Bex, by day, I turned some stones and discovered first a female of *Salamandra atra*. After about one hour, I had caught a total of 5 Salamanders and 2 young... Also a lot of *Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris* and a female of *Zootoca vivipara vivipara*.





*Salamandra atra*



same





other



juvenile





*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*



other





other

Finally, I visited a nice spot in France near Pontarlier for *Vipera berus*. At about 800 m next to a peat bog, a part of this population is pitch black.

I arrived in the evening, under a very strong storm. I found a lot of DOR & alive amphibians : *Lissotriton helveticus*, *Bufo bufo bufo*, *Rana temporaria*, *Rana kl. esculenta* and *Rana dalmatina*. I tried to pick up all animals I saw to save them, but obviously it was too much for me.

The day after, with better weather I found (only) one snake in the morning, but I was stopped by a bite through my thick leather gloves... A big surprise, indeed it's the first time a such a thing has happened. I finished quickly to take the pictures of the beast and extirpate most of the venom by pressure on my finger. Twenty minutes later I was Ok to continue herping, but without success.





*Lissotriton helveticus*



other





*Vipera berus* hidden among the vegetation



same





again



... and again the same

Go back home to Le Havre, end of the trip... but ready for the next !

**Reptiles (3) :**



*Anguis fragilis*  
*Vipera aspis atra*  
*Zootoca vivipara vivipara*

**Amphibiens (9) :**

*Pelophylax kl. esculenta*  
*Rana dalmatina*  
*Rana temporaria*  
*Bufo bufo bufo*  
*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*  
*Lissotriton helveticus*  
*Calotriton arnoldi*  
*Salamandra lanzai*  
*Salamandra atra*

**Total = 12 spp.**