

# Field Report, September 30th to November 2nd 2007 - France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal

by Frank Deschandol



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*Here is a short report of my solitary herp trip from the 30th of September to the 2nd of November 2007, so just about over a month of field herping in conditions quite cool and sometimes cold (as low as -5 C at night near the end of the trip).*

*Visited locations : Eastern France, Switzerland, Northern Italy, Spain and Portugal.*

*Distance covered = around 12 500 km ; all done in car (which also served as a hotel room).*

*At this time in year, some species are no longer visible, and it was the case for most lizards. Only few species of lizard were seen, yet I did not photograph every specimen seen.*

*I thank Pierre-Yves Vaucher, Stéphane Vitzthum, Jeroen Speybroeck, Sylvain Ursenbacher, Emanuele Biggi, Sara Costa, Francesco Tomasinelli, Fabio Pupin, Rubén Martínez, Marco Antonio, et André Lequet for the help they gave me, thank you !*

## FRANCE

A flying visit in the Doubs region to find black Adders (*Vipera berus*). Not one snake was visible except from this very young Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca austriaca*)... Maybe too late in the season for Adders.



Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca austriaca*)

## SWITZERLAND

My main target in Switzerland was black Asp vipers (*Vipera aspis atra*) although perfect conditions, I only found 3 specimens (about one every 2 hours of searching), all very dark. Also found a Slow Worm

(*Anguis fragilis*) in the same area.

After I searched during day and night the Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra atra*) in a well know sector for them but it seems that the season was too late for them. However Alpine newts (*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*) were very much present.



Black Asp viper (*Vipera aspis atra*)



Black Asp viper (*Vipera aspis atra*)





Black Asp viper (*Vipera aspis atra*)



Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*)



Alpine newt (*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*)





Alpine newt (*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*)

## FRANCE

Back in France near Genève, with a warm welcome from Pierre-Yves Vaucher and his family. After some field prospections in quite wet weather we found a few species : *Coronella austriaca austriaca*, *Alytes obstetricans obstetricans* and *Salamandra salamandra terrestris*.



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra terrestris*)

## ITALY

Heading to Saorge (F), I took a detour to check out an Alpine Salamander (*Salamandra lanzai*) location near Mont Viso in Italy. But the road was cut off 7 km before the site... shame...

## FRANCE

A foot walk near Saorge to find Strinati's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes strinatii strinatii*). After two hours I finally find the species in a shaded stream. Not easy to photograph during the day, as the species hides within cracks and holes in the rocks. The species seems very very common here.





Strinati's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes strinatii strinatii*)



Strinati's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes strinatii strinatii*)

## ITALY

Back in Italy where Emanuele Biggi and his friends guided me to some sites near Genova. On the first site it was all dry, no Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*) nor Strinati's Cave Salamander even after intense searches.

On the second site we found many Appenine Yellow-bellied Toad (*Bombina variegata pachypus*) and Italian Frogs (*Rana italica*).

I had to wait until the next day before seeing the famous Spectacled Salamanders of Genova. A real challenge to take a portrait photo !





Appenine Yellow-bellied Toad (*Bombina variegata pachypus*)



Italian Frog (*Rana italica*)



Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*)





Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*)



Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*)



Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*)





Northern Spectacled Salamander (*Salamandrina perspicillata*)

I headed south towards La Spezia to a cave to try and find another Cave Salamander species (*Speleomantes ambrosii*). Many specimens were around in the cave...



Ambrosi's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes ambrosii*)





Ambrosi's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes ambrosii*)



Ambrosi's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes ambrosii*)



Ambrosi's Cave Salamander (*Speleomantes ambrosii*)

## SPAIN

Arrived in Spain at the Parc de Montseny to find the very rare *Calotriton arnoldi*. However the streams were almost dry and I could only find 50 or so Fire Salamanders (*Salamandra salamandra terrestris*).





Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra terrestris*)

Quite drive by the lagune de Gallocanta with a few specimens found mostly under stones (especially juveniles) :



A young Bedriaga's Skink (*Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae*)





Parsley frog (*Pelodytes sp. nov*), sub-adult

Parc de l'Alto Tajo : visited this site I know now for 10 years for Spanish Painted Frog (*Discoglossus galganoi jeanneae*), two specimens were found along with a few Iberian Water frogs (*Rana perezi*). Although quite cool night temperatures, Common Midwife toads (*Alytes obstetricans pertinax*) were found.

I was only to see one Ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*), here, a wonderful female.



Spanish Painted Frog (*Discoglossus galganoi jeanneae*)



Spanish Painted Frog (*Discoglossus galganoi jeanneae*)





Iberian Water frog (*Pelophylax perezi*)



Common Midwife toad (*Alytes obstetricans pertinax*)



Common Midwife toad (*Alytes obstetricans pertinax*)





Ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*)

Northern Spain (Asturias, Cantabria...) is favourable for many sub-species of Fire Salamander, and even in some parts, the interaction of 2 different sub-species. It's possible to see atypical forms within a same population, like these ssp. *fastuosa* photos.

Met up with Rubén and Marco Antonio whom during three days showed me the rich herp region. We found a new locality for the Iberian frog (*Rana iberica*) and a new site for Golden-striped Salamander (*Chioglossa lusitanica longipes*).

We missed *Salamandra s. alfredschmidtii*, the weather was too dry on this day.



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa x bejarae*)





Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa x bejarae*)



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Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*)



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Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*)





Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)





Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)





Marbled newt (*Triturus marmoratus*)



Marbled newt (*Triturus marmoratus*)



Young Western Green lizard (*Lacerta bilineata*)





Iberian frog (*Rana iberica*)



Common Wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*)



Golden-striped Salamander (*Chioglossa lusitanica longipes*)





Golden-striped Salamander (*Chioglossa lusitanica longipes*)



Common toad (*Bufo spinosus*)

## PORTUGAL

Visited the parc Peneda Geres in North East Portugal. I went to some sites I had visited last year, but back then it was in summer. But now in October, not even one adult Schreiber's Green lizard (*Lacerta schreiberi*), only juveniles, shame. However after 4 hours of searching I did end up finding a Lataste's viper (*Vipera latastei latastei*).

And then I stumbled upon another Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca acutirostris*) where as I was searching for the Southern Smooth snake (*Coronella girondica*)...

Searching on the Portuguese side of the border I found a wonderful black Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei cantabrica*), who visibly was lucky to escape with the injuries he had sustained after an attack (?).





Young Schreiber's Green lizard (*Lacerta schreiberi*)



Iberian frog (*Rana iberica*)



Common toad (*Bufo spinosus*)





Common midwife toad (*Alytes obstetricans boscai*)



Iberian Wall lizard (*Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus*)



Lataste's viper (*Vipera latastei latastei*)





Lataste's viper (*Vipera latastei latastei*)



Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca acutirostris*)



Black Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei cantabrica*)





Black Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei cantabrica*)



Wounds of the Seoane's viper...

## SPAIN

Back in Spain between Madrid and Portugal to visit some interesting sites tipped by Rubén. Again the weather was too dry, too dry for Salamanders, however I found some interesting species like these Iberian Worm lizards (*Blanus cinereus*).





Iberian frog (*Rana iberica*)



Ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*)



Young Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*)





Young Large Psammodromus (*Psammodromus algirus*)



Iberian Worm lizard (*Blanus cinereus*)



Iberian Worm lizard (*Blanus cinereus*)





Iberian Worm lizard (*Blanus cinereus*)



Languedocien Scorpion (*Buthus occitanus*)

Parc de Monfragüe and surroundings. I would have never thought to have seen such a diverse and dense amount of amphibians at this time of year, some species were hard to locate such as Iberian Midwife toad (*Alytes cisternasii*). These toads calling in numbers within dense vegetation ! Otherwise there were many Spanish terrapins (*Mauremys leprosa*) like always at Monfragüe, I even hurt my right thumb trying to catch one, which complicated the rest of my trip (especially to turn over stones !).

Place au images :





Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)



Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)



Viperine snake (*Natrix maura*)





Viperine snake (*Natrix maura*)



Sharp-ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*)



Sharp-ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*)





Sharp-ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*)



Sharp-ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*)



Iberian Midwife toad (*Alytes cisternasii*)





Iberian Midwife toad (*Alytes cisternasii*)



Spanish terrapin (*Mauremys leprosa*)



Spanish terrapin (*Mauremys leprosa*)





*Lestes virens*, male



Southern Marbled newt (*Triturus pygmaeus*)



Southern Marbled newt (*Triturus pygmaeus*)





Southern Marbled newt (*Triturus pygmaeus*)



Stripeless tree frog (*Hyla meridionalis*)





Praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) of the brown form

I went back to Doñana, in Southern Spain, under heat reminiscent of summer. Only a few sub adult Spiny-footed lizards (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*) were visible, I didn't see any Carbonell's Wall lizard (*Podarcis carbonelli*) even a far...

I returned to a site where three years ago I found Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*), and after half a day of searching, I found 2, quite small and similar in colour.

I also looked for Lataste's viper (*Vipera latastei gaditana*) in the costal dunes for 2 days, with good weather conditions, but no luck.



Young Spiny-footed lizard (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*)





Young Spiny-footed lizard (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*)



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)





Foot of Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)



Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)





Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)



Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)



Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)





Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)



Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)



Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)





a large Western Spadefoot toad (*Pelobates cultripes*)



Iberian Midwife toad (*Alytes cisternasii*), female



Iberian Midwife toad (*Alytes cisternasii*) female with male mating (?), they separated when I shinned the light on them...





*Sphodromantis viridis*, male, a brown form



*Copris hispanus*, male

The weather was too dry to hope to find the southern sub-species of Fire Salamanders (*longirostris*, *morenica*, *crepoi*...), so I headed off to the Sierra de Segura to the East to try and find Southern Midwife toads (*Alytes dickhilleni*).

I had to persist in order to finally find an adult at night and the next day a few juveniles under stones trapped in a dry swimming pool.





Southern Midwife toad (*Alytes dickhilleni*), adult



Southern Midwife toad (*Alytes dickhilleni*), sub-adult



Juvenile Southern Midwife toads (*Alytes dickhilleni*)





Juvenile Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*)

Whilst traveling back up from the south, I took the chance to return to the north back to the, *Salamandra s. alfredschmidtii* sites. It turned out to be well worth it as I found tens of specimens in ideal conditions, rain. Here are some shots of the variability or the sub-species :



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)





Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)





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Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)



Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidtii*)





Golden-striped Salamander (*Chioglossa lusitanica longipes*)



Amplexus of Common frog (*Rana temporaria parvipalmata*)

### Reptiles (19) :

*Chalcides bedriagae bedriagae*  
*Anguis fragilis*  
*Timon lepidus*  
*Lacerta bilineata*  
*Lacerta schreiberi*  
*Psammodromus algirus*  
*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*  
*Tarentola mauritanica*  
*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*  
*Podarcis muralis*  
*Podarcis guadarramae lusitanicus*  
*Blanus cinereus*  
*Malpolon monspessulanus*  
*Coronella austriaca austriaca*



*Coronella austriaca acutirostris*  
*Vipera aspis atra*  
*Vipera latastei latastei*  
*Vipera seoanei cantabrica*  
*Natrix maura*  
*Mauremys leprosa*

**Amphibians (23) :**

*Speleomantes strinatii strinatii*  
*Speleomantes ambrosii*  
*Salamandrina perspicillata*  
*Bombina variegata pachypus*  
*Bufo spinosus*  
*Bufo calamita*  
*Discoglossus galganoi jeanneae*  
*Pelobates cultripes*  
*Alytes dickhilleni*  
*Alytes obstetricans pertinax*  
*Alytes obstetricans boscai*  
*Alytes cisternasii*  
*Pelodytes sp. nov*  
*Rana italica*  
*Rana iberica*  
*Rana temporaria parvipalmata*  
*Pelophylax perezi*  
*Hyla meridionalis*  
*Salamandra salamandra terrestris*  
*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa x bejarae*  
*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*  
*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*  
*Salamandra salamandra alfredschmidti*  
*Triturus marmoratus*  
*Triturus pygmaeus*  
*Ichthyosaura alpestris alpestris*  
*Chioglossa lusitanica longipes*  
*Pleurodeles waltl*

**Total = 42 spp.**