

Field Report, August 2007 - France/Spain

by Frank Deschandol



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The goal of the trip was to photograph the following species : Orsini's viper, Pyrenean Brook newt and Seoane's viper. My short stay on Ventoux allowed me, besides getting my photos, help JP Baron, specialist of the Orsini's viper who, each year, captures and studies specimens from this population. The work is quite tricky, because it depends largely on the weather, which was, upon my arrival, appalling ! We were 4 to search the low bushes.

The first day was average with only 2 specimens of Orsini's viper (*Vipera ursinii ursinii*) captured and 2 Smooth snakes (*Coronella austriaca austriaca*) which is quite rare for this area, and even rarer, a Western Whip snake (*Hierophis viridiflavus*) male of 1.3 m long. Which sometimes comes up from Malaucène and becomes a predator of the small Orsini's viper.

The next day was much better with 8 captures including a gravid female. I got stopped by a forest guard when I was alone which isn't a bad thing, there is quite a bit of surveillance.



Common Wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*)



Orsini's viper (*Vipera ursinii ursinii*)



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Orsini's viper (*Vipera ursinii ursinii*)



Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca austriaca*)



Western Whip snake (*Hierophis viridiflavus*)



Orsini's viper (*Vipera ursinii ursinii*)



On the way to the Pyrenees, *Saga Pedo*

The remaining time of the trip was spent in the Pyrenees searching for the Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*). As soon as I arrived I found a male in a small creek in the Vallée de Roncal (Spain), I found many specimens afterwards and they seem to be quite common. Night searches produced some Fire

salamanders (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*), Common toads (*Bufo spinosus*) and Common frogs (*Rana temporaria*).

This trip I decided to put less effort in searching for lizards in favour of snake, and I unfortunately found more dead on road then alive, Asp viper, Viperine snake, Montpellier snake, Southern Smooth snake, Fire salamander, Common toad, all paying a high price on the spanish roads, almost as if the drivers were blind.



Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*)



Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*)



Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*)



Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*)



habitat of the Pyrenean Brook newt (*Calotriton asper*)



Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)



Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)



Pyrenean Book newt (*Calotriton asper*)



Iberian Water frog (*Pelophylax perezi*)



Viperine snake (*Natrix maura*)



Viperine snake (*Natrix maura*)



Juvenile Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*)



Juvenile Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*)



Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara lousilantzi*)



Fire salamander (*Salamandra atra fastuosa*)



Fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra fastuosa*)



Common toad (*Bufo spinosus*)

The final leg of my trip brought me back to France to the Iraty forest to find the famous Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei seoanei*), and upon arrival, I found one juvenile dead on road, and later that day another young specimen crossing the road in front of my car.

The next day I searched frantically for them in the morning, finding 4 specimens including an enormous black specimen, here it seems the specimens are very different from those in North Western Spain. I however didn't manage to find the Pyrenean frog, (*Rana pyrenaica*), I searched kilometres along all sorts of canals and streams in places where they have been known to live, I have no explanations for this lack of specimens.



Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)



Juvenile Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei seoanei*)



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



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



Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei seoanei*)



Seoane's viper (*Vipera seoanei seoanei*)



Large Psammodromus (*Psammodromus algirus*)



Juvenile Ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*)

Reptiles (10) :

Timon lepidus
Podarcis muralis
Zootoca vivipara lousislantzi
Psammodromus algirus
Malpolon monspessulanus
Natrix maura
Vipera seoanei seoanei
Vipera ursinii ursinii
Hierophis viridiflavus
Coronella austriaca

Amphibians (5) :

Rana temporaria
Pelophylax perezi
Bufo spinosus
Salamandra salamandra fastuosa
Calotriton asper

Total = 15 spp.