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Tuesday May 20th 2008

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Field report - Ibiza & Formentera May 2008

by **Matt Wilson**

14th-18th May 2008

This was not exactly a serious herpetological field excursion, it was in fact an organised trip for foreign students living in Murcia, so that we could all experience the infamous nightlife this small Mediterranean island has to offer. So I along with a group of over a hundred students got on a bus from Murcia to Valencia where we took a ferry across to Ibiza where we would stay for the next five days. However between daytime excursions and very long nights in some very large and lively nightclubs I was determined to find some time to explore on my own and find the indigenous Ibiza Wall Lizards (*Podarcis pityusensis ssp*). I spent roughly one day in the field in Ibiza in proximity to Ibiza (Eivissa) Town the capital of the island, and only three hours during a boat trip on Formentera. As this was a last minute trip I was not able to piece together a lot of information for these islands, except that one thing was clear, neither island has any snakes....this made me feel rather strange when I was exploring as Formentera in particular would be perfect place for so many snakes to live, as on this small island I have never seen so many old stone walls. Furthermore it would appear that apart from the famous wall lizards both of these islands are poorly represented as far as reptiles and amphibians are concerned. There are un-confirmed reports from both islands for Hermann's Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) which to me doesn't seem likely, apparently the island's only amphibian the Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*) is rare on Ibiza, and I was unable to locate any Turkish Geckos (*Hemidactylus turcicus*) which are said to occur on Ibiza as well. But the lack of other species didn't really matter too much as I have never before seen a reptile in such high densities as both Ibiza Wall Lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*) on Ibiza, and Formentera Wall Lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*) on Formentera. In some areas I could estimate 30 animals for every 8-10 metres. It is clearly evident that these lizards can be found in virtually any habitat, as well as practically every off shore islet surround the main islands where further subspecies occur. I could easily spot the differences between some animals on Formentera as they were a beautiful blue colour in comparison to the greener animals from Ibiza. Some of the lizards living in the main town of Ibiza near the harbour were a lot more approachable than those found in natural and semi-natural habitats. The only other reptile I could find during this trip was the Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*) which I found to be day active and I never saw animals at night. Thanks to Phillipe Geniez for some info for this trip.

[Comments \(3\)](#)

Report quality: **5.0/5**
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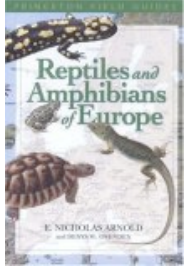
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The weather during this trip was not particularly nice, and most of the 5 days the sky was covered with clouds. But a few breaks in the clouds was enough to make all the lizards come out and bask so I was able to see many hundreds of the target species during my two field days, as well as around a dozen diurnal Moorish Geckos. Here



are a selection of habitats on Ibiza where I found rather high densities of the wall lizards along with some photos showing variation in colours and patterns.



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The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)

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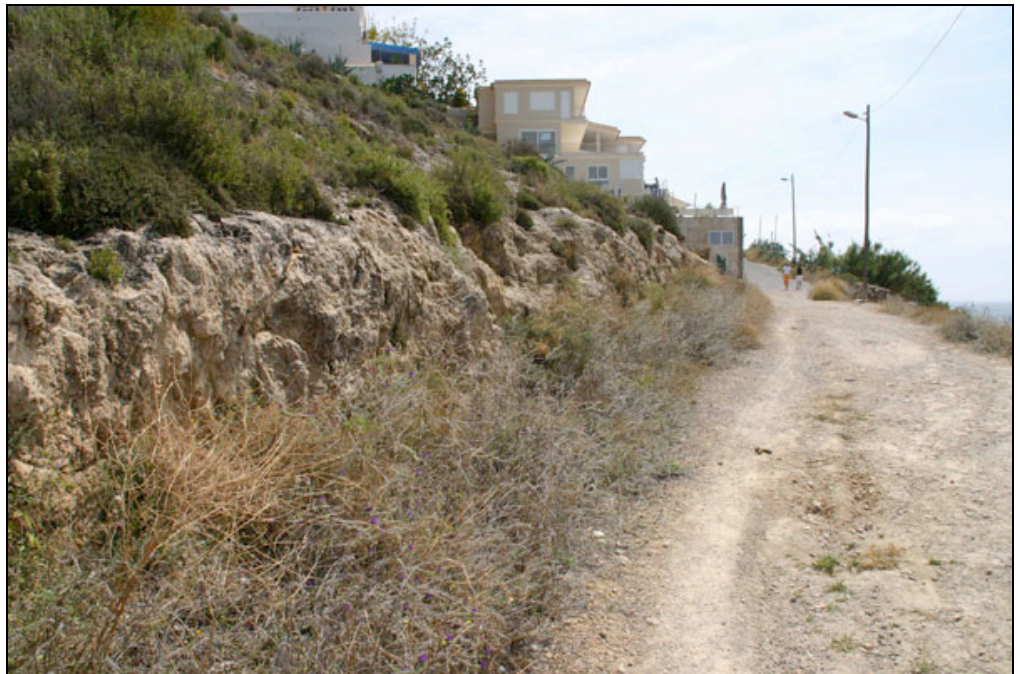
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The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Sea view



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Fort



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Habitat for Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*) and Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



Town



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



Dark specimen of Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)



A dead Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



The Ibiza sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis pityusensis*)



Scenery off of the coast of Ibiza

On 17th May I took a small boat across to Formentera which is one of the most beautiful places I have ever visited, and it was a pity I did not have longer to explore it than the few allocated hours. Whereas all my friends went to the beach I wandered off behind the small harbour and immediately found some nice habitats where I first saw the wonderful blue coloured male wall lizards, typical for the Formentera subspecies. This is without doubt one of the most beautiful lizards I have seen in Europe, and I was amazed by the amount of animals basking in small trees and in high bushes, but sadly I never actually got a photo of this behaviour before they leaped to the ground and took cover. Whilst exploring some cultivated land on this very flat, sandy island I had a quick chat with a local farmer. I asked him if he had ever seen snakes on Formentera to which he replied "Si claro, hay culebras aqui, de hecho se encuentra una de un metro" which translates as "yeh sure, there are snakes here, in fact there is one that grows up to a metre in length". So maybe there are snakes there after all, clearly these islands need a more thorough exploration.



Formentera



View of the bay



The Formentera sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



The Formentera sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



The Formentera sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



The Formentera sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



Habitat of the Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



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The Formentera sub-species of Ibiza Wall lizard (*Podarcis pityusensis formenterae*)



View of the sea

Comments (3)

Vicente Hernandez

Sabía que encontrarías herpetos en las islas. Aunque no parecen muy variadas las especies. Espero que te hayas divertido con los otros atractivos de la isla.

19/5/2008 21h33 - (CET)

Matt Wilson

Si claro, pero no hay mucho con respecto a reptiles, pero vale la pena para ver las Podarcis. Pero vimos muchas cosas mas en Ibiza...y es una buena isla por la vida nocturnal, la que era el objetivo de este viaje!

19/5/2008 23h04 - (CET)

Daniel Phillips

Didn't understand all of that, but I love the lizards on this trip, although being Podarcis and this family is generally forgotten when a herper gets the chance to wrangle a huge snake ! But once you get down and personal with these guys, you really can appreciate their architecture, body shape and build, colours, they are wonderful!

20/5/2008 1h02 - (CET)



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