



### Menorca, 17. - 24.03.2013

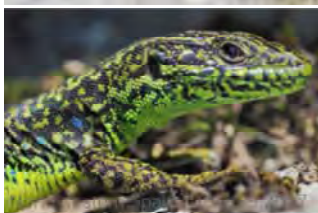
A trip to Menorca is a must for everyone interested in European herpetofauna: Here, some species occur that can be found nowhere else in Europe. Accordingly, Menorca is one of the best-explored Mediterranean islands. With appropriate locality data herping is easy - thanks to Mike Zawadzki and Bobby Bok! All in all, the trip provided three new species for us - a great yield!



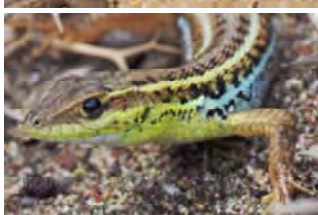
Snow on Mallorca

17:03

During our arrival we had a stopover on Mallorca, which presented itself with snow-capped mountains. Apparently, it had been cold in the days before but when we arrived the weather was nice. We rushed to our accommodation, quickly dropped our luggage and started our first herping tour: In addition to *Podarcis siculus* and *Tarentola mauritanica* which are common and widespread all over the island we found *Rhinechis scalaris* and *Natrix maura*. The discovery of *Rhinechis scalaris* was a personal victory as we had seen that species in the Alicante area many times, but never managed to shoot good pictures...



The first finding on Menorca: a subadult *Rhinechis scalaris*...





Pyrenees, 2008 - 2016



Sicily & Aeolian Islands, 2016  
6.6.2016



...and an adult specimen: We thought this was a big one, but some days later we learned that we were wrong (see below)



Spain, 2015 - 19.9.2015



11.7.2015



15.11



Juvenile *Natrix maura*

18.03.

At sunny but windy weather (Menorca is always windy) we went to the western part of the island in search of *Teira perspicillata*.



Spain, 29.9. - 14.9.2014



Mallorca / Menorca



*Podarcis siculus*: this species is supposed to be introduced from Italy and has populated the whole island.



*Teira perspicillata*: our first new species!



*Teira perspicillata* was probably introduced from Morocco and is found in Europe only on Menorca.



Photographer and lizard



These animals are patient photo-models...with high population density.



Teira - Tarentola flat-sharing community...



...the lizard showed respect for the gecko.

19.03.

Our next challenge: the Balearic lizard (*Podarcis lilfordi*) is extinct on Menorca but still occurs on several offshore islands and islets – with various subspecies. There has been much speculation about the reason for this species' extinction on Menorca – in particular, the introduced species *Podarcis siculus* and *Macroprotodon cucullatus* were suspected. For us, a direct displacement or extermination by these species seems unlikely - but perhaps there are epidemiological reasons? Anyway: At sunny weather we went to Port Addaia to find a boat to the islands - unfortunately without success. Hence, we had to take the direct route: The island of Ses Mones can be reached from Port Addaia wading through the shallow water. The Mediterranean is still very cold in March, but the island rewarded us with a *Podarcis lilfordi* population – another new species for us!



On the way to Ses Mones



Podarcis lilfordi, yawning



Subadult Podarcis lilfordi - the population of Ses Mones has not been described as a distinct subspecies so far.



Pair of Podarcis lilfordi: on Ses Mones, this species is not rare, there seems to be a stable population.



Podarcis lilfordi: note the large masseteric shield

After this successful excursion we wanted to try it again at another place: The Escull de Binicodrell off the south coast of Menorca is the habitat of subspecies Podarcis lilfordi codrollensis. The way to the islands was a challenge (strong waves, cold water getting deeper and deeper, swimming for the last 15 meters). The Escull de Binicodrell Gros is a bare, rocky islet which surprises with a large lizard population - a fascinating place!



Esculls de Binicodrell...



Home of *Podarcis lilfordi codrollensis* ...



...a dark brown colored animal.



A green-dotted specimen





Podarcis lilfordi is a bold wall lizard with a massive head



Podarcis lilfordi eating the remains of a snail

After the adventures on the islands we went to another snake place and found Rhinechis scalaris and: Macroprotodon cucullatus - the third new species for us. We had completed our twitching list within the first three days – from now on, we were deeply relaxed!



Juvenile *Rhinechis scalaris* - these animals just don't stand still and are therefore difficult to photograph.



*Macroprotodon cucullatus* - the species was probably introduced from North Africa



*Emys orbicularis*

20.03.

Rain in the morning but some sun in the afternoon. We passed the time looking for orchids but only found common and widespread Mediterranean species. Another snake hunt in the afternoon brought *Macroprotodon cucullatus* and *Natrix Maura*, again.



*Ophrys tenthredinifera*



*Ophrys speculum* – note the microscopic ants working on that flower



Macroprotodon cucullatus...



...another pretty colored specimen



A magnificent Natrix Maura



Snake Photography



Pastures dominate the landscape in Menorca...

21.03.

Our next attempts to reach other *Podarcis lilfordi* habitats (Illa de l'Aire, Illa Sargantana) were unsuccessful - no boats available. Hence, we tried it again in Port Addaia and this time, we found a skipper who brought us to the Illa Gran d'Addaia, the home of *Podarcis lilfordi addayae* - a highlight!



On Illa Gran d'Addaia



Podarcis lilfordi addayae



Portrait: at the windy weather, the animals seemed to have a preference for basking on lichens as these were warmer than the bare rocks.



A pair of Podarcis lilfordi addayae...



...another pair...



Snuggling on the lichen carpet...



A green-backed female



Another nice green-backed specimen



*Hemidactylus turcicus*: the animals on the Illa Gran d'Addaia were described as subspecies *spinalis*, but recent studies point out that this is not a valid subspecies.





Visiting islands by boat is much more convenient than swimming!

22.03.

Visit of another Teira-habitat at the west coast. In the afternoon: Shopping in Ciutadella!



Menorca - the island of stone walls...



Teira perspicillata...



...another specimen with nice coloration



A female and a juvenile basking together



Searching lizards in Ciutadella (Podarcis commercialis):



Found in high population density...



It is obvious that the Minorcans are proud of their "Sargantanas".

23.03.

We visited a coastal habitat with *Testudo hermanni*. There we found, in addition to the tortoises, two impressively large *Rhinechis scalaris* - a grand finale! At 24.03. early in the morning, we drove to the airport in pouring rain - the end of a successful and very relaxed trip.



Testudo hermanni



Juvenile Testudo hermanni



This very large Rhinechis scalaris...



...reacted rather angrily to the photographer!



An even bigger Rhinechis scalaris.



..."snake wrestling".



Podarcis siculus observing the scene, looking rather skeptical.

The home of European lizards - by Birgit & Peter Oefinger!