

Mallorca 23rd to 28th of March 2006

This was a very short trip to Mallorca quite early in the season and the main focus was vacation rather than twitching. Anyway I saw five species of herptiles and two of them were among the four unique to the Balears in Europe. In total there are around fifteen species to be seen on the islands and some turtles in the sea.

The most famous species is the Majorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*) also called Ferreret which first was found in 1979 high up in the mountains of Tramuntana. The other three species are lizards; **Lilford's Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis lilfordi*) has originally had a much wider distribution on the islands but predators introduced by man have exterminated it from the mainland Mallorca and Menorca and now they can only be found on the smaller islands around the two main ones, **Ibiza Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis pityusensis*) can mainly be found on Ibiza but has been introduced to some places on Mallorca and finally **Moroccan Rock Lizard** (*Scelarcis perspicillata*) can only be found on Menorca and is originally introduced from Africa.

Friday the 24th of March

During the first day in Palma de Mallorca I saw the **Ibiza Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis pityusensis*) 10 meters NW the cathedral on a pile of rocks being the fundament for a big cross. It was sunbathing in the chilly wind and did not mind much all people walking by closely. A second animal was observed down by the water along the town wall about 200 meters NW the cathedral. I guess there must be much more individuals when the weather is warmer. This was quite early in the morning.

For visiting Palma I can recommend the Apuntadores hotel, just a short walk from the cathedral and with a magnificent view from the roof terrace on the eight floor. An excellent café is the Bosch café at plaza Rey Juan Carlos where the locals meet for breakfast before the tourists wake up.





Saturday the 25th of March

We picked up a rental car at the airport and went for a three day trip around the Tramuntana Mountains in the north of Mallorca. The first stop was the small village Sant Elm at the very west point. Here you can normally catch boats for the Nature Park Sa Dragonera, a very good place to see **Lilford's Lizard** (*Podarcis lilfordi*). This day we were not lucky as there were no boat running and we continued along the wonderfully dramatic north coast. In the afternoon we reached the higher mountains between Sollér and Lluc where the Ferreret can be found in small ponds in deep canyons. The mating season starts in April and continues until late summer. We made a walk in the mountains but did not find any locality. You should have a guide and permission to walk on private property to be successful. At the information centre in Lluc they have a nice little exhibition about the Ferreret. Thank's to a recovery programme the population in 2004 was estimated to 34 populations with 5000 adults. Many of these localities are constructed to save the species. We stayed at the Lluc monastery which is a very good base for excursions in the area. A lot of trails are made in the mountains and the hotel is very nice and cheap (just 36 Euro for a big room with three big beds and space for the double.) There are also camping facilities close to the monastery.





Sunday the 26th of March

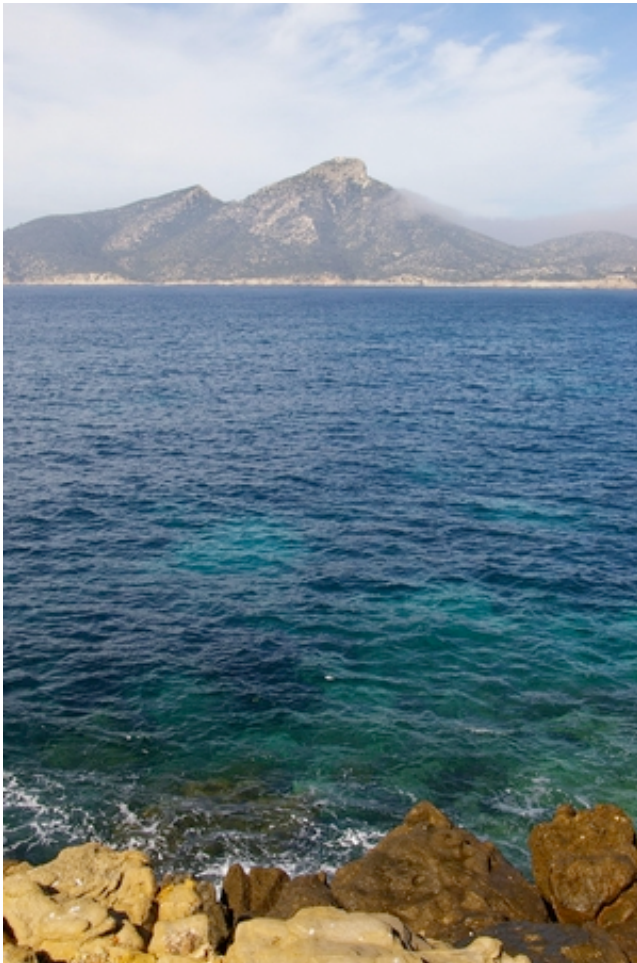
This day we made a nice drive up to Cap de Formentor which is the northern point on the island. The landscape is very dramatic and the road is twisting around the rocks. We then continued to the s'Albufera Nature Park south of Alcúdia. This is the most important wetland on the islands and home for many rare birds. The site provided good birdwatching from the many trails and hides they have arranged. I also saw a dead **Viperine Snake** (*Natrix maura*) and (as usual) my wife saw a full size living animal on the path, two meters away, when I was busy taking photos of a **European Pond Terrapin** (*Emys orbicularis*). She always sees snakes which I miss. During the whole visit the **Iberian Water Frog** (*Pelophylax perezi*) was singing from the wetlands. I am sure that if we had stayed longer we could have heard **Green Toad** (*Epidalea viridis*) too. There is a nice information centre where I bought the book *Reptils i amfibis de les Balears*. I thought it was in Spanish but it turned out to be catalan/mallorquin (If I had read the title carefully I would have known). Anyway it is a good presentation of the herpetofauna of the islands and updated in 2003. *Epidalea viridis* is found on most of Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza but not Formentera, *Hyla meridionalis* on Menorca, *Pelophylax perezi*, *Tarentola mauritanica* (except Formentera) and *Hemidactylus turcicus* on all the islands. *Podarcis lilfordi* are living on islands around the national park Cabrera in the south and some islands along the west side of Mallorca and the north side of Menorca. The lizards on the different islands have a variety of patterns and colours. *Podarcis pityusensis* lives on Ibiza and Formentera but has also introduced itself (or by help of man) to Palma and Cala Rajada on Mallorca. *Podarcis siculus* is also found on most of Menorca where *Teira perspicillata* is more sparse. *Natrix maura* is introduced and the main threat to the Ferreret and other frogs and lizards on Mallorca and Menorca. *Macrotodon cucullatus* has the same distribution but the third snake *Rhinechis scalaris* is limited to Menorca. There are some populations of *Eurotestudo hermanni* on southern and eastern Mallorca and in many places on Menorca. *Testudo graeca* is restricted to the area west of Palma and one site on Formentera. *Emys orbicularis* lives in wetlands but is threatened by the introduced **Red-eared Terrapin**, *Trachemys scripta*.





Monday the 27th of March

Finally we got a positive answer when we phoned the boat company that takes tourists to Sa Dragonera. The drive down from Lluc in the mountains through Inca and Palma to Sant Elm just took one hour and forty-five minutes. This was the hottest day so far with over 25 degrees and a hazy sky. The boat just takes 15 minutes over and as soon we came on land there were almost a razzling sound of lizards running around. There are thousands of them everywhere and in some places 10-15 were lying sunbathing together. On some paths it is almost difficult not to put your foot on one! We had a nice walk up the mountain side and then started to walk north to the cape when we saw the boat coming for the last catch! We had forgotten to change the clock for summertime that started almost 36 hours earlier. We ran back to the boat and just made it for 3 o'clock. Another couple did not show up and probably had to spend the night on the island (forbidden!). The hostel Dragonera can be recommended with nice view over the bay.



Tuesday the 28th of March

We drove early (7.15) from Sant Elm to the airport outside Palma (a one hour drive). I was surprised that it was this hot already in late March. We had between 20-25 degrees C all five days and a little

wind the first day. For exploring the nature on Mallorca April and May are probably better for herpetofauna as for birds and flowers. The short distances are convenient and make it very easy to see the whole island in a short time by car.



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