City-herping in Palma de Mallorca

15.3.

We arrived on Mallorca in the afternoon and went directly to Palma. Beneath the cathedral there is a population of introduced Podarcis pityusensis. These lizards as well as the omnipresent Tarentola mauritanica were photographed quickly and afterwards we did what you would expect from tourists on Mallorca: numerous street cafes allured with cold beer and we didn’t try too hard to resist this seduction.
Like on Menorca (see our 2013 report) the native Balearic lizard (Podarcis lilfordi) is extinct on Mallorca and can only be found on the offshore islets. One of these islets has been connected to the mainland by a pier and thus can be approached easily. The subspecies status of lizards on that islet is not clear. On the surrounding islands, the melanistic subspecies jordansi occurs; the Cabrera Archipelago south of Mallorca is populated by subspecies kuligae. The animals in the habitat we visited seem to be hybrids of two subspecies - probably, the kuligae specimen were introduced by tourist boats on this islet. The lizards were extremely shy, which might have to do with the fact that this place is preferably used as a dog toilet. So, cute dogs and their lordies frequently trample through the bushes. Nevertheless, the population seems to be vital - we estimate >50 animals - and we even could see the lizards in the hotel gardens of the adjacent mainland: the species is back on the Majorcan mainland.
and their hybrids - very nice!

another one

and one more - yeah!
With a little patience, beautiful portrait shots were possible.

Podarcis lifordi with fashionable accessory on its wrist.

View to the Cabrera Archipelago.
We visited another population of introduced Podarcis pityusensis near Palma. The animals live in a touristic beach area, where they occur in high population density. Apparently they got accustomed to people and were easy to photograph - the whole setting was like a zoo visit, but it was a lot of fun. In the afternoon we took the plane to Alicante and arrived at Santa Pola, our next station, in the evening.
Curious Podarcis pityusensis

Morning toilet

Common sunbasking
All You Can Eat...

18.3.

The province of Alicante is home of about 20 reptile species. This sounded pretty promising for us and highly motivated we started herping. Our first goal was a dune area south of Santa Pola. There, our target species was Acanthodactylus erythrurus. We didn’t have good pictures of adult animals of this species so far - now we had the opportunity. The area proved to be quite efficient: we found six species at this place.
Acanthodactylus erythrurus - adult

Psammotromus edwarsianus

Nonsense #1: Blanus cinereus - as commonly known, this species lives on tree branches
Nonsense #2: Hemidactylus turcicus - sunbasking animals rarely seen

Juvenile Rhinechis scalaris

Juvenile Timon nevadensis
Timon nevadensis: The adult animals were extremely shy - about 30 meters flight distance!

19.3.

From Santa Pola we took a boat trip to Tabarca, a small island with interesting herpetofauna. After one and a half hours we had seen what we wanted to see and took the next boat back. In the afternoon we visited the reserve of El Hondo, an extensive wetland which turned out to be less productive as we had hoped. Most parts of the area were difficult to access, not the best herping place. Anyhow, we found some Natrix maura under some litter. So far, everything went like clockwork - so we did what tourists in Santa Pola are expected to do: Nice sidewalk cafes allured us with cold beer...
and its inhabitants: Chalcides bedragai...

and Coronella girondica - about to shed its skin

The reserve El Hondo
20.3.

In the morning, we explored a coastal section where Podarcis hispanicus occurs. Here, we almost stumbled over an adult Malpolon monspessulanus - an impressive, large snake! In the afternoon we went to Torrevieja, a place with more than 100,000 inhabitants in a post-apocalyptic touristic scenery: an insider tip for all who want to spent their holidays between English sports bars, Chinese fast food restaurants and Indian souvenir shops. The lagoon of La Mata, a nature reserve, is situated like an island in between the hotels and appartments. There, we could take some more pictures of Acanthodactylus erythrurus. In the evening, we left the coast and moved to the mountains of northern Alicante province where we hoped to find further reptile species.
The coast near Santa Pola - habitat of... 

Podarcis hispanicus (Spanish Wall Lizard) and...
Malpolon monspessulanus

The nature reserve of La Mata

Juvenile Acanthodactylus erythrurus and...
21.3.

The mountains of the northern province of Alicante are one of the few areas in Europe where even in winter numerous reptiles can be found. Now, in spring we had high expectations: We expected the lizards and snakes to literally stand in line to be photographed by us. To our surprise, we found significantly fewer reptiles than in winter, even the very common Podarcis liolepis proved to be less abundant than expected.
Pancake position: Podarcis liolepis warming up in the sun

Psammodromus edwardsianus

Tarentola mauritanica

Tarentola mauritanica
Cold and windy - bad conditions for herping. After the relatively successful past few days, we were disappointed. Gratitude is obviously not the core strength of the herpers: If, after six successful days, the seventh day does not deliver he will be offended. We spent the remaining time with photographing spring flowers. On 23.3. we had to take our return flight to Düsseldorf and at finally sighting of our photo material we were at least a little bit grateful...
Sleeping Podarcis liolepis

Fritillaria lusitanica

Ophrys lucentina - an endemic orchid of the northern province of Alicante
Orchis olbiensis

Romulea columnae

Adios y hasta luego!

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