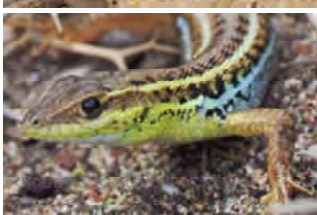




Spain, November 2008 / February 2009

In winter 2008/2009 we had the opportunity to visit the Alicante region twice (in November and February). Hence, we got an idea of the reptile activities in some habitats in November as well as in February. Actually, reptiles can be noticed in this region all-the-year. We concentrated our attention to the local types of *Podarcis hispanicus*: Our major finding is that the *Podarcis* in the northern part of the Alicante province differ considerably from those in the southern part of that province.



Podarcis liolepis from Callosa d'en Sarria

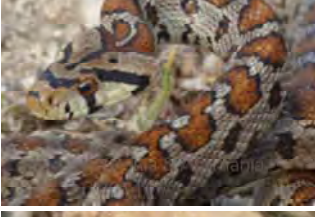
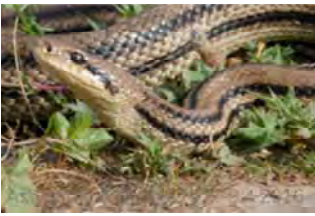
The article published by Geniez et al (2010) has revealed that the lizards from the north of the Alicante Province are *Podarcis liolepis* while those of Southern Alicante are *Podarcis hispanicus* (sensu stricto). Besides of the wall lizards we visited the island of Tabarca where we found *Chalcides bedriagai* – one of our most wanted species of that region during the last years. Furthermore, in November we noticed numerous insects (in particular grasshoppers), whereas in February few insects could be seen – but that time has been more interesting from the botanical perspective.

Santa Pola

Near Santa Pola, there are still some unspoiled coastal sections. In a dune habitat (which is now a nature reserve and therefore is fenced) we noticed several juvenile *Acanthodactylus erythrurus* in November. The lizards can easily be observed from the plank roadways crossing the reserve. Obviously *Acanthodactylus* hibernates: In earlier years, we didn't notice these lizards in December, in February 2009 we only spotted one juvenile (which was the only reptile we saw there at all in February). Probably, in comparison to rock habitats the sand-dunes are cooler and more humid and therefore are hardly capable for reptile activities in winter. In fact, the single *Acanthodactylus* we noticed in February wasn't found in a sandy habitat but on a dry hill of saline clay. The dunes are inhabited by *Acanthodactylus* and the two *Psammadromus*-species in syntopy, but not by *Podarcis hispanicus*.



Dune habitat at Santa Pola



Juvenile *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*: lots of them in November...

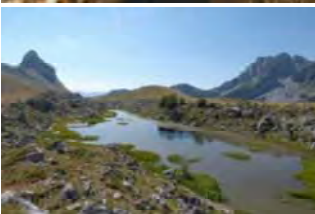
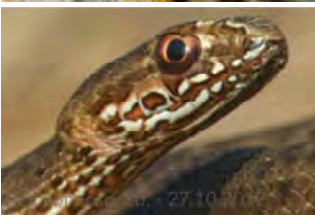


...but only a single one in February



Aeshna mixta

Mallorca / Alcarr



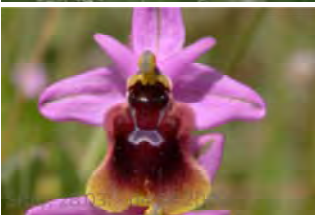
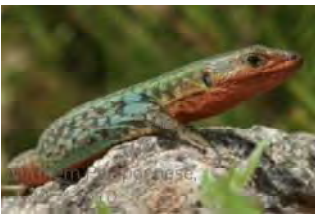
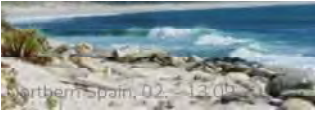
In a rocky coastal section near Santa Pola (February 2009) we noticed the two *Psammodromus*-species in syntopy with *Podarcis hispanicus*, but not *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*. The *Podarcis* of that area are *P. hispanicus* (sensu stricto). They show a greyish colouration, distinct dorsolaterale stripes and one or two black vertebral stripes.



Coastal section at Santa Pola: habitat of *Podarcis hispanicus*, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Psammodromus hispanicus*



Podarcis hispanicus (sensu stricto) with characteristic colouration



Very nosy young male of *P. hispanicus* (sensu stricto)



Psammodromus algirus (juvenile)...



...the camera aroused this lizard's curiosity



Isla Tabarca

According to our literature, the island of Tabarca is inhabited by five species: *Hemidactylus turcicus*, *Tarentola mauritanica*, *Chalcides bedriagai*, *Malpolon monspessulanus*, *Coronella girondica*. During two trips on the island we saw all these species. The richness in species on Tabarca is remarkable with regard to the fact that the island is flat, sparsely vegetated and rather small (it takes only 20 minutes to walk around the island). Both gecko species seem to be quite common there. Searching for *Chalcides bedriagai* we weren't lucky in November but succeeded in February.



Habitat on Tabarca



Hemidactylus turcicus



Chalcides bedriagai



Coronella girondica



Cadaver of *Malpolon monspessulanus* with 1,5 m length



Asteriscus maritimus



Echium plantagineum



Asphodelus fistulosus

Habitats near Callosa d'en Sarria

From an imaginary line between the cities of Benidorm and Alcoy southwards there can be found *Podarcis hispanicus* (sensu stricto) with the same colouration as the lizards we have seen in Santa Pola (The northernmost point where we have seen *P. hispanicus* (sensu stricto) is Finestrat near Benidorm). The *Podarcis* north of this line – for instance in the area of Callosa d'en Sarria – look quite different: brown or greenish colouration, weak dorsolateral stripes and usually no vertebral stripes. These are *Podarcis liolepis*. The border between both species corresponds with a climatic frontier: The region south of Benidorm is extremely dry like many parts in south-eastern Spain whereas the area north of Benidorm is characterized by mountains of more than 1000 m altitude with a more humid climate and rich Mediterranean vegetation. Near Callosa, we noticed *Podarcis liolepis* in high population density together with other reptiles. Rock habitats are inhabited as well as cultivated areas, in particular plantations with dry stone walls.



Habitat of *Tarentola mauritanica*, *Podarcis liolepis*, *Psammodromus algirus*, *Hemorrhois hippocrepis*



Tarentola mauritanica



Green coloured male of *P. liolepis*



Female of *P. liolepis*: characteristic pattern



For comparison: Female of *P. hispanicus* (sensu stricto) from Finestrat - only 10 km south of Callosa



Dark coloured male of *P. liolepis* from Callosa



P. liolepis posing in front of the camera



Hemorrhois hippocrepis

Mountains at Callosa d'en Sarria

In mountain habitats with warm micro-climate near Callosa d'en Sarria we noticed *Podarcis liolepis* being active up to an altitude of 800 m in winter. The lizards share their habitat with the two *Psammodromus*-species, *Timon lepidus* and *Elaphe scalaris*.



Male *Podarcis liolepis*



Another male of *P. liolepis*



Psammotromus hispanicus hunting for insects



Anacridium aegyptium



Mantis sp.

In the mountains several spring flowers and the first orchids (*Ophrys fusca*) were flourishing – a foretaste of the coming season!



Left: *Narcissus assoanus*, right: *Ophrys fusca*



Left: *Gagea fistulosa* (?), right: *Muscari botryoides*



Romulea columnae

Literature:

Geniez, Philippe; Guillaume, Claude P.; Crochet, Pierre-André; Renoult, Julien P.; Bacquet, Paul: Systematics of the *Podarcis hispanicus*-complex (Sauria, Lacertidae) II: the valid name of the north-eastern Spanish form (2010)

Geniez, Philippe; Cluchier, Alexandre; Sá-Sousa, Paolo; Guillaume, Claude P.; Crochet, Pierre-André: Systematics of the *Podarcis hispanicus*-complex (Sauria, Lacertidae) I: Redefinition, morphology and distribution of the nominotypical taxon

Renoult, J. (2006): Histoire évolutive du Lézard ibérique *Podarcis hispanicus* (Squamata: Lacertidae): discordances entre morphologie, ADN nucléaire et ADN mitochondrial