

Herpetological notes on the Island of Kastellorizo (South-east Aegean, Greece)

The Dodecanese Island of Kastellorizo (South-east Aegean, Greece) is situated some 140 km east of Rhodes and two km off the Lycian peninsula in southern Turkey; it is about 10 km² in size, the highest elevation being Mount Paleokastro (272 m). This limestone island exhibits typical forms of karst and is totally deprived of overground springs. It is mostly covered with phrygana-type vegetation trodden by goats, and the few cultivated areas, surrounded with wire fences are to be found in the west of the city Megisti (plain of Acheres) and on the plateau overhanging it (plain of Aghios Ioannis).

During the last visit in April 2002, and contrary to the situation observed at an earlier stay in 1998 (PAYSANT 1999), many natural depressions and tanks or artificial reservoirs were filled with water, which was a sign of more important fall and winter precipitation, as it is suggested by comparing the average rate of precipitation recorded in Antalya from September 1997 to March 1998 (1397.9 mm) with that from September 2001 to March 2002 (2359.5 mm) (<http://www.weatheronline.co.uk>).

Despite the presence of numerous wire fences protecting the plots where goats were left in extensive grazing, most areas were visited, particularly the sites already prospected by VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985). The goal of the visit was to contribute to our knowledge of the herpetofauna and its distribution on the island. All individuals captured were photographed and released on site. For record localities see figure 1.

Early references to the herpetofauna on Kastellorizo can be found in VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985) and VAN WINGERDE (1986). As for the other references concerning *Lyciasalamandra luschani basoglui* (BARAN & ATATÜR, 1980), whose population is very important on the island, see the review in VEITH et al. (2001).

Lyciasalamandra luschani basoglui (BARAN & ATATÜR, 1980). The presence of this species has been reported by KIORTSIS &

al. (1974), TZANNTATOU-POLYMENI & XYDA (1978), VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985), TZANNTATOU-POLYMENI (1986), KLEWEN (1991), KARANDINOS & PARASCHI (1992), POLYMENI (1994), MORAVEC (1997), SOFIANDOU (1997), PAYSANT (1999), STEINFARTZ & MUTZ (1999), THORN & RAFFAELLI (2001) and VEITH et al. (2001). Widely distributed on the whole island, the subspecific status of this population remained uncertain until MORAVEC's (1997) work on the basis on morphometric data. Due to the lack of night outings, this species was mainly met with in day time while lifting stones on humid substratum. Several dozens of individuals were thus discovered. It is considered rare in Greece (KARANDINOS et al. 1992) because of its distribution in Greece being restricted to this island and the threats coming from collection for scientific purposes (e.g., between 1973 and 1978, 224 specimens were collected – only published data).

Bufo viridis viridis LAURENTI, 1768. This is the first record of *B. viridis* for Kastellorizo. Adults, tadpoles and imagos from localities 2, 4, 9, 10 and 14. The lack of sources strongly conditions the reproduction of this species, which had not been encountered during the 1998 stay. The main places of reproduction consist of the tanks and other artificial reservoirs set to collect rainwater as well as a few shallow limestone depressions. Unfortunately such concrete facilities are often deadly for the adults after the end of their breeding cycle, because of the vertical walls. Only the area of Acheres, a humid depression surrounding huge reservoirs, seems to foster the reproduction of the species as it is proved by the thousands of tadpoles and imagos encountered.

Hemidactylus turcicus (LINNEUS, 1758). Known from the city of Megisti (VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU 1985), not found during this stay on the island.

Tenuidactylus (Mediodactylus) kotschyi (STEINDACHNER, 1870). Known from Agios Ioannis and Acheres (VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU 1985), not found during this stay on the island.

Ablepharus kitaibelii BIBRON & BORY, 1833. Known from Megisti (VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU 1985). Adults from localities 3 and 7. Found in quite abandoned formerly cultivated areas or next to dwelling

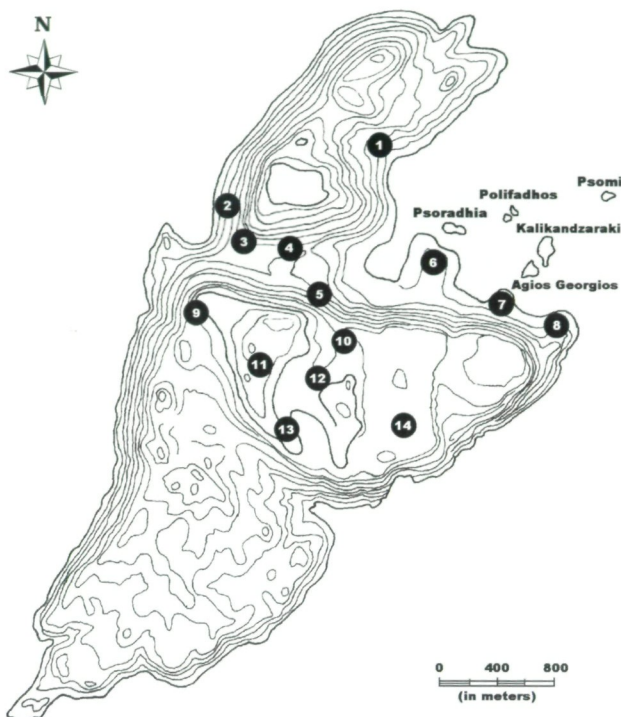


Fig. 1: Map of Kastellorizo Island (Dodecanese, Greece). 1 – Papalazaro's estate, 2 – Zafiri's vineyard, 3 – Plain of Kílias, 4 – Plain of Acheres, 5 – Monastery of Agia Triada, 6 – Hill Agios Nikolaos, 7 – Churchyard of Agios Savva, 8 – Pevkakia, 9 – Road to the airport, 10 – Phrygana and small reservoir, 11 – Footpath to Mount Vikla, 12 – Chapel Agios Ioannis, 13 – Footpath's crossroad, 14 – Monastery of Agios Georgios.

places. Data on the subspecific status are not available.

Euprepis auratus auratus (LINNEUS, 1758). Recently moved from the genus *Mabuya* to the genus *Euprepis* (MAUSFELD & SCHMITZ 2003). Seven adults from localities 1, 5, 10, and 12. This is the first record of *E. auratus* for Kastellorizo. This species was mainly encountered by the low walls of dry stone parting the cultivated areas as well as in the areas of lapiaz with *Sarcopoterium spinosum*. One of the captured individuals was 189 mm SVL. Aegean island records are from Samos, Rhodes, Symi and Kos (DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS 2002). These Greek islands constitute the westernmost distribution limit for the species which, until now, is not listed among the threatened reptiles of Greece in KARADINOS & PARASCHI (1992).

Ophiomorus punctatissimus (BIBRON & BORY, 1833). One specimen collected in

the soil of the plain of Agios Ioannis (VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU 1985), also recorded by DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). Not found during this stay on the island.

Laudakia stellio (LINNAEUS, 1758). This taxon was mentioned from the Island by XYDA (1983, 1986), VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985), CHONDROPOULOS (1986), PAYSANT (1999) and DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). Adults and juveniles from localities 5, 6 and 8, all encountered in fractured rocks.

Blanus strauchi BEDRIAGA, 1884. Found by VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985) on the plain of Agios Ioannis; reported by BUTTLE (1990, 1995) and DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). Two specimens from locality 3. One of them (SVL 122 mm) was found under sheet metal and the other one (SVL 167 mm, damaged tail) under a large stone, as it was seeking shelter in its hole, next to a formerly-cultivated piece of land.



Fig. 2: Adult specimen of *Euprepis auratus* (LINNAEUS, 1758) from Kastellorizo Island (Dodecanese, Greece).

This Asian species reaches its western distribution limit on the Aegean islands of Kos, Rhodes, Leros, Samos, Symi and Fourni Archipelago (DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS 2002). It is considered rare in Greece (KARANDINOS & PARASCHI 1992)

Typhlops vermicularis MERREM, 1820. Two specimens were previously found in the plain of Agios Ioannis (PAYSANT 1999). One specimen from locality 3, found under a stone, a few meters from the individuals of *Blanus strauchi*.

Dolichophis jugularis (LINNAEUS, 1758). Recently placed in the genus *Dolichophis* GISTEL, 1868 (NAGY et al. 2004). Reported from Megisti, Agios Georgios and Agios Stephanos (PAYSANT 1999). Five male adults from localities 3, 4, 11, 12, and 13. All specimens were uniformly blackish above, one was observed to have a salmon pink to reddish belly. This very swift and quick-tempered species, was found in high grass in the shade of trees as well as in rocky areas that offered numerous shelters.

Hemorrhois nummifer (REUSS, 1834). Recorded by VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985) from Agios Ioannis and Acheres; mentioned from the island by DIMITROPOULOS (1986), CHONDROPOULOS (1989) and DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). One

adult specimen from locality 14. Found on a low wall next to a dwelling house, a prey in its stomach. Being of a rather uniform brownish grey, as mentioned by DIMITROPOULOS (1986), the individual had none of the cephalic or dorsal marks which generally characterize the species, thus causing confusion with *Vipera xanthina* (GRAY, 1849).

Eirenis modestus (MARTIN, 1838). Found at Agios Ioannis and Acheres (VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU 1985), reported from the island by DIMITROPOULOS (1986), CHONDROPOULOS (1989) and DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). One greyish specimen from locality 1. It was found coiled up under a stone next to an open area of terra rossa, in the shade of a locust tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*).

Malpolon monspessulanus insignitus (GEOFFROY, 1827). VALAKOS & PAPANAGIOTOU (1985) collected one specimen from Acheres. The snake's occurrence was mentioned by CHONDROPOULOS (1989), DE HAAN (1999) and DIMITROPOULOS & IOANNIDIS (2002). Not found during this stay on the island.

Vipera xanthina (GRAY, 1849). VAN WINGERDE (1986) reported the occurrence of the species on the island, however with some doubts. This doubtful record was re-

peatedly mentioned later (DIMITROPOULOS et al. 1988; DIMITROPOULOS 1990; BRUNO & MAUGERI 1990). Not found during this stay on the island.

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AUTHOR: Franck PAYSANT, Place de l'Église - Le Bourg, F-35133 Le Châtelier, France < Franck.Paysant@ac-rennes.fr >

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