

## Contributions to the Knowledge on the Amphibians and Reptiles of Teleorman County (Southern Romania)

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**Abstract.** The results of faunistical surveys of the amphibians in Teleorman county (Southern Romania) are presented here; we have identified nine amphibian species (*Triturus cristatus*, *Lissotriton vulgaris*, *Bombina bombina*, *Pelobates syriacus*, *P. fuscus*, *Bufo bufo*, *B. viridis*, *Hyla arborea*, *Rana dalmatina*, *Pelophylax ridibundus*), two amphibian hybrids (*Triturus cristatus* × *T. dobrogicus* and *Pelophylax* kl. *esculentus*) and six reptile species (*Emys orbicularis*, *Lacerta agilis*, *L. viridis*, *Podarcis tauricus*, *Natrix natrix*, *Dolichophis caspius*), with new records for many of these.

**Key words:** Teleorman county, amphibians, reptiles, localities, distribution.

### INTRODUCTION

In the general climate of flourishing faunistic studies in herpetology in Romania (see, e.g., Cogălniceanu et al., 2013a, b and literature quoted therein), Teleorman county remains under-represented in terms of both studies and distribution records for amphibian and reptile species. Despite some recent interesting reptile records (Sahlean et al., 2010, for *Dolichophis caspius*; Sos et al., 2012, for *Darevskia praticola*; Covaciu–Marcov et al., 2012 and Ciofleac, 2014 for *Eryx jaculus*), data synthesis shows that although there are records of numerous species (*Triturus cristatus*, *T. dobrogicus*, *Lissotriton vulgaris*, *Bombina bombina*, *Pelobates fuscus*, *Bufo viridis*, *Hyla arborea*, *Rana dalmatina*, *Pelophylax ridibundus*/P. kl. *esculentus*, *Emys orbicularis*, *Lacerta agilis*, *L. viridis*, *Darevskia (praticola) pontica*, *Podarcis tauricus*, *Ablepharus kitaibelii*, *Eryx jaculus*, *Dolichophis caspius*, *Natrix natrix*, *N. tessellata*), many are old and/or concentrated in the Danube floodplain (Török, 2001; Ferentzi et al., 2011; Cogălniceanu et al., 2013a, b). We attempt to enlarge the knowledge of the distribution and ecology of herpetofaunal species in Teleorman county by presenting recent observations upon the species in this area.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is based upon field work performed in 2001, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, with field trips realized each year between March and June in a variety of points that can be grouped into 66 localities or study areas (see table 1); the geographical coordinates were acquired by GPS. Qualitative observations were undertaken using the active transects method, combining visual and acoustic identification (after Heyer et al., 1994, and McDiarmid, 1992, in Cogălniceanu, 1997), the transect being 4 m wide. For the *Triturus* newts we have used morphological identification criteria

Table 1

Locations investigated with geographical coordinates and species found

| Locality                                 | Coordinates           | Observed species/hybrids  |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Turnu Măgurele – road                    | N43 44.925 E24 51.538 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Turnu Măgurele – Turris                  | N43 43.100 E24 51.413 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. syriacus</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. agilis</i>  |
| Sâi Rriver at confluence with the Danube | N43 43.352 E24 49.795 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>L. agilis</i>   |
| Lower Sâi River                          | N43 44.729 E24 49.567 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>B. bufo</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> |
| Izlaz                                    | N43 42.757 E24 46.257 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i>   |
| Danube at Izlaz                          | N43 42.924 E24 46.963 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Bujoreni                                 | N44 06.956 E25 39.470 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i>   |
| Near Drăgănești-Vlașca                   | N44 06.548 E25 37.307 | <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>L. agilis</i>  |
| Drăgănești-Vlașca                        | N44 06.062 E25 36.363 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>   |
| Botoroaga                                | N44 08.711 E25 33.786 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>   |
| Moșteni                                  | N44 11.484 E25 30.349 | <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Videle                                   | N44 16.148 E25 31.389 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Blejești                                 | N44 17.343 E25 28.271 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>L. agilis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>  |
| Near Blejești                            | N44 17.772 E25 25.450 | <i>L. vulgaris</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>               |
| Baciu                                    | N44 18.893 E25 26.317 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Glavacioc                                | N44 24.037 E25 20.778 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Poroschia                                | N43 55.179 E25 22.031 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Along DN (national road) 51              | N43 52.210 E25 24.569 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>   |
| Smârdioasa                               | N43 50.233 E25 26.254 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>   |
| Along DN (national road) 51              | N43 42.084 E25 22.276 | <i>P. tauricus</i>  |
| Near Zimnicea                            | N43 39.283 E25 23.306 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i>  |
| Brusturelu                               | N43 41.684 E25 31.114 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>   |

Table 1 (continued)

| Locality   | Coordinates           | Observed species/hybrids   |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Near Bujoru  | N43 42.603 E25 32.897 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>P. syriacus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> ,<br><i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>     |
| Pietroșani   | N43 42.240 E25 37.067 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. syriacus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>  |
| Between Bujoru and Bragadiru                       | N43 43.667 E25 32.294 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>L. ogilis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>  |
| Bragadiru  | N43 44.464 E25 31.576 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>B. bufo</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> ,<br><i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i> |
| Cervenia 1   | N43 48.335 E25 28.846 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Cervenia 2   | N43 48.597 E25 28.529 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Ștorobăneasa                                       | N43 53.145 E25 26.774 | <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Teleormanu   | N43 58.231 E25 27.493 | <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>   |
| County limit near Poeni                            | N44 23.913 E25 30.035 | <i>B. bombina</i>  |
| Siliștea Mică                                      | N44 21.835 E25 19.629 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>   |
| Slăvești 1   | N44 21.896 E25 10.975 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Tătăraștii de Sus                                  | N44 24.310 E25 06.701 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Between Tătăraștii de Sus and Siliștea Gumești     | N44 20.110 E25 02.763 | <i>T. cristatus</i> , <i>L. vulgaris</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i>   |
| Baldovinești                                       | N44 20.825 E25 02.495 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i>  |
| Slăvești 2   | N44 20.992 E25 10.169 | <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Between Slăvești and Ciolăneștii din Deal          | N44 20.308 E25 07.467 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>   |
| Siliștea Gumești                                   | N44 21.465 E25 02.546 | <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Between Balaci and Siliștea Gumești                | N44 21.370 E24 58.033 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>  |
| Furculești   | N43 53.621 E25 06.970 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| DJ (county road) 701 Tătăraști – Ciolănești Vale   | N44 20.959 E25 10.987 | <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| DJ (county road) 701 Tătăraști – Ciolănești Vale 2 | N44 20.511 E25 08.636 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Coșoteni   | N44 07.377 E25 00.843 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>   |

Table 1 (continued)

| Locality                               | Coordinates           | Observed species/hybrids   |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Drăgăneștii de Vede                    | N44 08.409 E25 03.587 | <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Drăgăneștii de Vede 1                  | N44 07.916 E25 02.674 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>   |
| Drăgăneștii de Vede 2                  | N44 08.787 E25 04.273 | <i>T. cristatus</i> , <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>L. agilis</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>     |
| Fântânele                              | N43 42.712 E25 16.901 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Lisa                                   | N43 46.763 E25 09.207 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Traian                                 | N43 45.914 E25 01.607 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. fuscus</i> , <i>P. syriacus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> |
| Bogdana                                | N43 54.629 E25 06.328 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>  |
| Broșteanca                             | N43 56.187 E25 04.200 | <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>  |
| DN 601 between Videle and county limit | N44 18.442 E25 32.859 | <i>T. cristatus</i> x <i>T. dobrogeicus</i> , <i>L. vulgaris</i> , <i>B. bombina</i>   |
| Seaca                                  | N43 44.711 E25 04.957 | <i>D. caspius</i>  |
| Poiana 1                               | N43 45.567 E24 57.161 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>   |
| Poiana 2                               | N43 43.939 E24 57.320 | <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>   |
| Traian 2                               | N43 45.788 E24 58.345 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Vânători                               | N43 45.406 E25 09.219 | <i>D. caspius</i>  |
| Near Bujoru 2                          | N43 41.924 E25 32.213 | <i>L. vulgaris</i> , <i>P. syriacus</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>                 |
| Vitânești                              | N44 00.588 E25 24.860 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>E. orbicularis</i>   |
| Satu Vecchi                            | N44 11.224 E25 01.509 | <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Near Cucuiești                         | N44 11.735 E24 55.680 | <i>H. arborea</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |
| Cucuiești                              | N44 10.840 E24 56.762 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Didești                                | N44 12.967 E24 51.090 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>R. dalmatina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. kl. esculentus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i> , <i>N. natrix</i>                 |
| Dudu                                   | N43 58.808 E24 39.446 | <i>B. viridis</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i> , <i>P. tauricus</i> , <i>L. viridis</i>  |
| Bârseștii de Jos                       | N44 00.805 E24 37.965 | <i>B. bombina</i> , <i>P. ridibundus</i>   |

as provided by, e.g., Fuhn, 1960, Cogălniceanu et al., 2000, and Nöllert & Nöllert, 2003; see also Cvijanović et al., 2015 for criteria which can be used to confirm our identification of *Triturus* larvae. For the genus *Pelophylax* (i.e. „Green Frogs” or „West Palaearctic Water Frogs”) specific identification was performed using morphological and morphometrical characteristics and song-based identification if possible – cf., e.g., Nöllert & Nöllert, 2003; see also Sas, 2010 for the use of such criteria. Photographs were taken whenever possible. Sound recordings were made using the recording option of digital cameras, resulting in .mov files, the sound of which can be saved as .mp3 sound files. These were converted to .wav sounds and processed with the Syrinx free bioacoustics software to obtain waveform sonograms.

### RESULTS

We have found nine amphibian species (*Triturus cristatus* [Fig. 1], *Lissotriton vulgaris* [Fig. 2], *Bombina bombina*, *Pelobates syriacus*, *P. fuscus* [Fig. 3], *Bufo bufo* [Fig. 4], *B. viridis*, *Hyla arborea*, *Rana dalmatina*, *Pelophylax ridibundus*), two amphibian hybrids (*Triturus cristatus* × *T. dobrogicus* and *Pelophylax* kl. *esculentus* [Fig. 5]) and six reptile species (*Emys orbicularis* [Fig. 6A], *Lacerta agilis*, *L. viridis*, *Podarcis tauricus*, *Natrix natrix*, *Dolichophis caspius*) distributed across the Teleorman county; most of the records tabulated below (Table 1) are new.

### DISCUSSIONS

The only species firstly recorded for this county is *Bufo bufo* (*Pelobates syriacus*, recorded from areas close to Teleorman – see, e.g., Székely et al., 2013 – is also known to be present in the area from unpublished data – V. Cioflec, pers. comm.). We did not find *Darevskia (praticola) pontica* and *Eryx jaculus*; however, given that the records of these species are recent and certain, and thus in no need of confirmation, we did not prioritize their search. We neither found „pure” *Triturus dobrogicus* (i.e. with no morphological evidence of introgressive hybridization with *T. cristatus*), nor *Ablepharus kitaibelii*, nor *Natrix tessellata*. If *Triturus dobrogicus* and *Ablepharus* are



Fig. 1 – *Triturus cristatus* larva, Drăgăneștii de Vede, 2015 (photo by O. Iftime);

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Fig. 2 – *Lissotriton vulgaris*, adult male, near Blejești, 2013 (photo by A. Iftime);



Fig. 3 – *Pelobates fuscus*, adult with egg string, Baci, 2014 (photo by O. Iftime).



Fig. 4 – *Bufo bufo*, adult male, Sâi, 2012 (photo by A. Iftime);

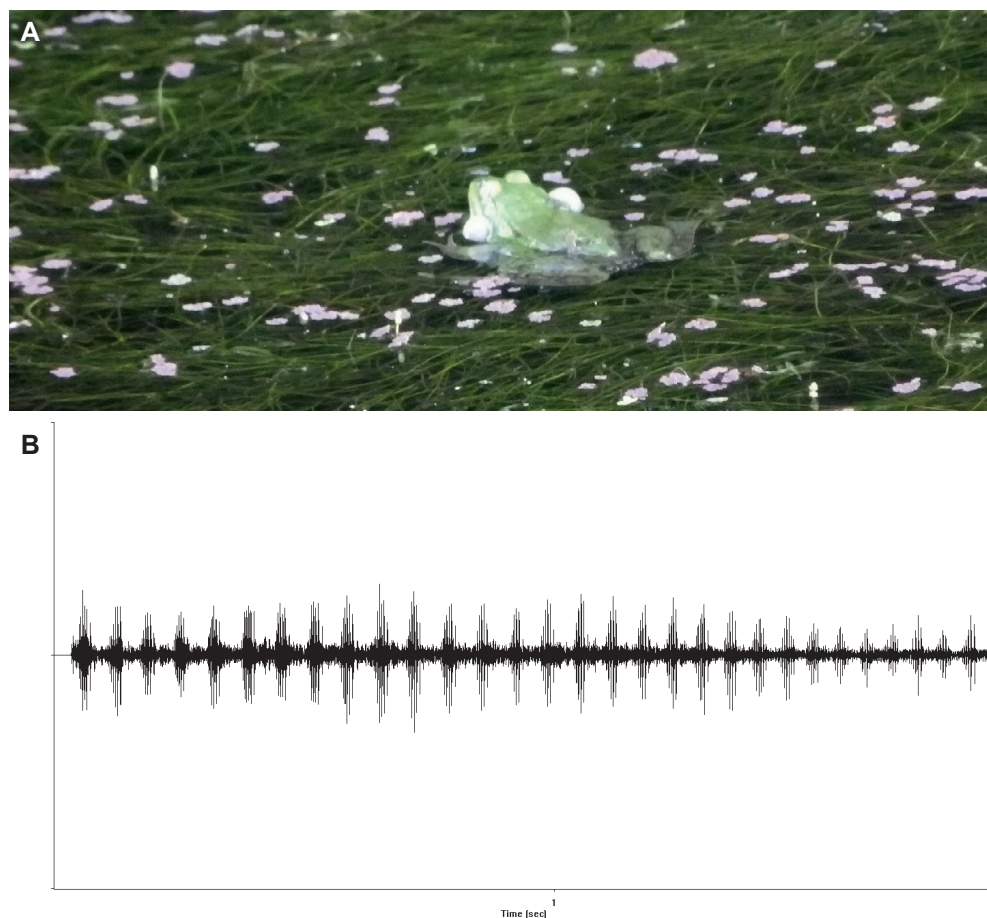


Fig. 5 – A: *Pelophylax kl. esculentus*, adult male, Didești, 2015 (photo by O. Iftime); note the white vocal sacs; B: wave form of a song of the same specimen (from a video record by O. Iftime).

rare and harder to detect, the absence of *Natrix tessellata* in our transects is harder to explain (but see Strugariu et al. 2011 for a discussion of the scarcity of *N. tessellata* records in southern Romania). Also, we note the relative scarcity of *Lacerta agilis* (belonging to the subspecies *L. a. chersonensis*) which accords with our observations from the neighbouring Giurgiu county (Iftime & Iftime, 2008).

The most common amphibians are *Pelophylax ridibundus* (54 locations) and *Bombina bombina* (31 locations, which is rejoicing as the species is protected under the European Habitats Directive Annex II), whereas the most common reptiles are *Lacerta viridis* (22 locations) and *Podarcis tauricus* (13 locations). *Emys orbicularis*, also a protected species under the European Habitats Directive Annex II, was found in 12 locations, which is to be noted.

Also of interest are the five locations for *Pelobates syriacus* and the occurrence of *Rana dalmatina* in the Danubian floodplain, known from old records (see map in Cogălniceanu et al., 2013a) in this area and confirmed here.



Fig. 6 – *Emys orbicularis*, adult, near Zimnicea, 2014 (photo by A. Iftime).

In the case of Crested Newts (the *Triturus cristatus* species group) we found a population (north from Videle) in which the morphology indicates hybrid origin, i.e. introgressive hybridization between *T. cristatus* and *T. dobrogicus*, a phenomenon known to the east of this area, in Giurgiu and Ilfov (see, e.g., Arntzen et al., 1997; Cogălniceanu et al., 2000; Iftime & Iftime, 2008). In this population some specimens appear morphologically closer to *T. dobrogicus*, while others to *T. cristatus*.

In the *Pelophylax* genus (the „West Palaearctic Water Frogs” or „Green Frogs”), we found, besides the abundant *P. ridibundus*, eight populations where *P. ridibundus* coexists with the hybridogenetic *P. kl. esculentus*. The other species of this hybridogenetic complex, *Pelophylax lessonae*, was not found by us in Teleorman, although it is found in the nearby Giurgiu (Iftime & Iftime, 2008); this allows to speculate upon the presence of a R–E hybridogenetic system<sup>1</sup> in this area, for, at least in one population (Didești, observed in May 2015) coexisting *P. ridibundus* and *P. kl. esculentus* appeared to be involved together in reproductive activities, sound displays (see fig. 6A, B; compare *P. kl. esculentus* sonogram with, e.g., Nöllert & Nöllert, 2003, p. 352) and associated fights, there being no *P. lessonae* in the area. However, this hypothesis needs further confirmation.

We also noted that in most of the studied area the anthropic pressure is limited for now, and manifested in the pollution of surface waters by sewage and agricultural runoff, and also in the mortality in traffic. However, in the northern part of the county there is widespread hydrocarbure pollution caused by oil rigs; species such as *Bombina bombina*, *Bufo viridis* and *Pelophylax ridibundus* do live in such polluted waterbodies, but the impact may be significant and would validate more research.

Also, in some situations amphibians live in waterbodies naturally contaminated with less common substances; for instance, in an oak forest near Drăgănești de Vede *Bombina bombina* and *Pelophylax ridibundus* were living in a ditch where the water

<sup>1</sup>The R–E system appears to be the most common in places where the prevalence of *Pelophylax* hybridogenetic systems has been investigated in Romania, e.g. the north–western plains (Sas, 2010), as well as along the Danube in Serbia (Krizmanić & Ivanović, 2010).



was dark, likely from contamination with tanninous substances from oak bark and leaves.

Over all, the Teleorman county offers good conditions for the long-term persistence of amphibian and reptile species, including such species which are protected under the European Habitats Directive Annex II as *Triturus cristatus* (and its hybrids with the equally protected *T. dobrogicus*), *Bombina bombina* and *Emys orbicularis*, providing good opportunities for conservation.

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