

## HERPTILE 12 (4)

HERPETOFAUNA OF CRETE

D. T. Snowden  
2 East Close  
Keyworth  
Notts.

Introduction

Whilst holidaying on the Greek Island of Crete between 22nd June and 6th July 1987, it was possible to explore the various terrain's and habitats around the "picture-postcard" town of Agios Nikolaos for the local herpetofauna. Arnold and Burton (1978) list fifteen species of amphibians and reptiles which occur on the island.

Geography

Crete is Greece's southernmost and longest island and the fourth largest in the Mediterranean after Sicily, Sardinia and Cyprus covering some 5148 sq Km. Crete offers beautiful and contrasting landscapes from mountain ranges and valleys to wide open plains and plateaux. The climate is typical Mediterranean with hot, sunny dry summers, and mild winters. Temperatures in June and July reach 30-33°C.

Amphibians

Although no species were actually seen frogs could be heard from a distance, calling at a small pond located at Krista and the familiar sound of amphibians dropping into the water when I approached the site was also a sign of their presence. Species thought to occur on the island are:

1. Green toad (*Bufo viridis*)
2. Common tree frog (*Hyla arborea*)
3. Marsh or lake frog (*Rana ridibunda*)

Reptiles

1. Moorish gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)  
Several of these lizards were seen both on the outside walls of buildings in the resorts and in dry stone walls at an archaeological site called Lato.
2. Mediterranean Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)  
Only one of these unique lizards was seen, basking - one metre off the ground - in an area of bushes about 500m east of Lato.

3. Balkan green lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*)  
Three adults and one juvenile were seen in a small clearing in the same area as the Chameleon.
4. Ocellated Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*)  
These were seen in scrub area behind the beach of a small cove near to Malia.
5. Dice Snake (*Natrix tessellata*)  
Only one, 60-70 cm specimen - possibly female - of this snake was seen basking at the edge of a small plant-choked pond. Surprisingly, the snake allowed me to approach within three metres of its position before retreating into the pond.

Remaining species listed by Arnold and Burton:

6. Stripe-necked terrapin - *Mauremys caspica*
7. Turkish gecko - *Hemidactylus turcicus*
8. Kotschy's Gecko - *Cyrtodactylus kotschyi*
9. Erhard's Wall lizard - *Podarcis erhardii*
10. Balkan Whip Snake - *Coluber gemonensis*
11. Leopard Snake - *Elaphe situla*
12. Cat snake - *Telescopus fallax*

#### Summary

During a 14 day stay on the island of Crete, five of the fifteen species of reptile and amphibians thought to occur on the island were seen and recorded. A more detailed study of the island would certainly reveal more species and hopefully, this will be possible at a later date.

#### Reference

1. Arnold, E.N. & Burton, J.A. (1978) A field guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe. Collins, London.

#### Additional reading

1. Godfrey, J. & Karlsake, E. (1986) Landscapes of Eastern Crete - A Countryside guide to car tours, walks and picnics. Sunflower Books, London.



**ISLAND OF CRETE**

