



# WILDLIFE OF THE GRANDE SASSIERE NATIONAL RESERVE



Copyright: Of Mountains and Marmots Project

Translation from French to English by Ann Diaz, Edited by Barbara Mandula, March 2014.



# AMPHIBIAN

Species sheet:

**GRENOUILLE ROUSSE/GRASS FROG**

*Rana temporaria*

Famille : Ranidae

**Geographic Range:**

This European frog is found in northern Spain, northern Italy and northern Greece to northern Scandinavia, western Siberia and northern Kazakhstan, up to an altitude of 3000 meters

**Habitat:**

The grass frog inhabits wetlands: ponds, meadows, ditches, bogs and stream banks. It lives on land but is never very far from water, in which it breeds.

**Description:**

The color of this frog varies from russet to brown to gray. Its skin has black spots, which are most prominent in animals living in mountains. The grass frog is between 7 and 10 cm long.

Like all brown frogs of this family, the grass frog has a dark brown spot next to the outside of each eye (temporal side). In early spring the frog lays its eggs in compact clusters that often float on the surface of the water.



# REPTILES



Species sheet:

## LÉZARD VIVIPARE/COMMON LIZARD

*Zootoca vivipara*

Famille : Lacertidae

### Geographic Range:

The common lizard is found throughout Eurasia.

### Habitat:

This species is found on the ground in various environments near water, such as in undergrowth, bogs and stony troughs at high altitudes.

### Description:

Adult lizards measure no more than 15 cm in length. They have brown skin with the color being quite variable, sometimes completely black, with small, light-colored dots. The flanks are the darkest. A black line is often visible along the back, as are evenly distributed dark brown spots. The male common lizard, however, has a distinctive feature that precludes it from being confused with its rock wall cousin. Its undersides, especially the interior of its thighs and the underside of its tail, are bright red or bright orange.



## Species sheet:

# VIPÈRE ASPIC/ASP VIPER

*Vipera aspis*

Famille : Viperidae

## **Geographic range:**

This viper is present only in western Europe. It occurs in northeastern Spain, in France, Switzerland, Italy, southwestern Germany, Slovenia and Croatia. It is found everywhere in France except north of a line drawn from the Loire-Atlantic to the Moselle. This northern limit exists because this viper requires a high enough temperature to finish its reproductive cycle before hibernation.

## **Habitat:**

The species inhabits a wide variety of environments, usually in zones of transition between two types of habitats. It frequents uneven terrain, such as overgrown rocky slopes, or open woods and their edges, or dry stone walls.

## **Description:**

Like all vipers, the eyes of the asp viper have vertical pupils. Its body is thick and it has a large triangular head. On its body, the scales exhibit a lengthwise, median ridge (it is said that they are streamlined). The pattern on its back varies, but in France often forms a design of dark transverse stripes which can become a dark brown or black zigzag stripe in the southwest. The adult viper is between 50 and 70 cm long but can sometimes reach 90 cm.



# MAMMALS

## Species sheet:

# BOUQUETIN DES ALPES/IBEX

*Capra ibex*

Famille : Bovidea

## **Geographic range:**

As its name indicates, this species is found only in alpine areas.

## **Habitat:**

The alpine ibex is chiefly associated with high altitude habitats. However, depending on the season, these ibexes can be observed at altitudes varying from 500 to 3000 meters.

## **Description:**

This species is part of the goat family. The male, also called a “billy goat”, is 75 to 90 cm high at the withers, and between 105 and 160 cm in length from muzzle to tail. The female is smaller and slimmer than the male. She measures 70 to 78 cm in height at the withers, and between 105 and 145 cm in length. She weighs between 35 and 50 kg. From the age of 3 months, the male’s head is adorned with permanent horns, bent towards the rear. The horns grow throughout his life, and can reach up to 1 meter in length.

The female, likewise, grows permanent horns, which are smaller than those of the male, reaching a maximum length of 30 cm.

The fur of the male is dark chestnut, whereas the female’s fur is beige.



Male



Female

## Species sheet:

# CHAMOIS/ALPINE CHAMOIS

*Rupicapra rupicapra*

Famille : Bovidés

## Geographic range:

In France the alpine chamois is found in mountain areas, such as the Vosges, Jura, Alps and Pyrenees.

## Habitat:

Chamois live in rocky areas, forests and mountain pastures up to 3500 meters in altitude, depending on the season.

## Description:

The alpine chamois has the silhouette of a goat, but is more slender. It is 120 to 130 cm in length, with a 7 to 8 cm long tail. Its height varies between 70 and 80 cm at its withers, and it weighs 35 to 60 kg.

Its summer coat is light reddish-brown with a deep brown stripe along its back. In winter, its coat is brown-black, longer and thicker. The alpine chamois is easy to recognize in winter by its face mask: its forehead and cheeks are white, separated by a black band extending from ears to muzzle.

Males have a mane on their back called the "beard".

Both sexes have slender, vertical horns, bent at the tip and thicker among males than females.



Summer coat



Winter coat



Species sheet:

**LOUP D'EUROPE/EUROPEAN WOLF**

*Canis lupus*

Famille : Canidae

**Geographic range:**

In France this wolf is found in mountain areas, such as the Vosges, Jura, Alps and eastern Pyrenees.

**Habitat:**

It frequents forest and mountain areas where its prey, such as small goats and chamois, breeds.

**Description:**

Morphologically, the wolf resembles a dog, which makes identification difficult, especially when observations are fleeting. Its fur is mostly gray, while the front of its forward paws and its facial mask are white. The forequarters are more powerful than those of dogs, the chest deeper and the head larger. The wolf's appearance is that of a long-legged animal.



## Species sheet:

# RENARD ROUX/RED FOX

*Vulpes vulpes*

Famille : Canidae

## **Geographic range:**

The red fox is found throughout Europe.

## **Habitat:**

While it is found in highest concentrations in agricultural areas, the red fox lives in diverse environments such as countryside, forest, mountains or towns.

## **Description:**

The red fox more or less resembles a dog with a long body, short legs and a thick bushy tail. Its long pointed ears measure between 8 and 15 cm in length. Its muzzle is especially elongated. The red fox is about 40 cm high at its withers. Its fur is generally a bright reddish brown, with white on its throat, underside, and the end of its tail. However, it is not uncommon to see deep black, totally brown or partially beige individuals.



Species sheet:

**CHEVREUIL/ROE DEER**

*Capreolus capreolus*

Famille : Cervidae

**Geographic range:**

The roe deer is present in all parts of France except Corsica.

**Habitat:**

It is found in a variety of habitats. It frequents cultivated areas, forests, plains, groves, mountainous areas and countryside with small fields and hedges, but remains close to wooded areas.

**Description:**

It is a small animal, agile and very fast, with a brownish coat and a face that is quite gray. Adults are 62 to 67 cm high at the withers. Males have antlers.



Species sheet:

## LÉROT/GARDEN DORMOUSE

*Eliomys quercinus*

Famille : Gliridae

### **Geographic range:**

The dormouse is found in all European countries.

### **Habitat:**

Its habitat is quite diverse, depending on what shelter is available. This small hibernating animal frequents parks, gardens, hedges and woody areas. If need be, it hibernates in caves or in outbuildings.

### **Description:**

It measures about 15 cm in length excluding its tail, and weighs between 40 and 120 grams. This small rodent is recognizable by its black facial mask. Its fur is gray-brown, sometimes mixed with russet on its back. The flanks are gray-brown. The cheeks and belly are white. Its tail is long and very downy, with a tip that has longer black and white fur that forms a terminal plume.



## Species sheet:

# LIÈVRE D'EUROPE/BROWN HARE

*Lepus europaeus*

Famille : Leporidae

## **Geographic range:**

The brown hare occurs nearly everywhere in Europe, with the exception of Portugal, central and southern Spain, Sardinia, Sicily and Norway.

## **Habitat:**

This species of hare is found in open areas, such as prairies, cultivated fields, hedges and steppes, up to 2000 meters in altitude.

## **Description:**

The brown hare resembles a big rabbit, but is taller and thinner. It has larger paws and larger ears than the wild rabbit. Its size varies between 50 and 70 cm in length and it weighs 2.5 to 6.5 kg. Its paws measure between 12 and 15 cm, which allows it to attain speeds in excess of 60 km/h. It has a small, slightly bushy tail measuring 7 to 11 cm in length with black fur on top and white on the underside. Its ears, longer than its head, have black tips. Its fur is thick and generally deep brown, while its belly is white or beige.





Species sheet:

**LIÈVRE VARIABLE/MOUNTAIN HARE**

*Lepus timidus*

Famille : Leporidae

**Geographic range:**

In France, the mountain hare is found solely in the Alps.

**Habitat:**

This species of hare lives only in mountainous areas between 1500 and 3000 meters in altitude.

**Description:**

Its discreet behavior and the difficulty of accessing its habitat make the mountain hare less well-known than its cousin, the brown hare. However, like certain other mountain species, the mountain hare changes color with the seasons. It closely resembles the brown hare, but has shorter ears and very large rear paws, which serve as snowshoes for moving about on the snow.



Summer coat



Winter coat

Species sheet:

## MULOT A COLLIER/YELLOW NECKED MOUSE

*Apodemus flavicollis*

Famille : Muridae

### **Geographic range:**

The yellow-necked mouse is found throughout Europe.

### **Habitat:**

It frequents all types of wooded areas.

### **Description:**

It measures 8 to 13 cm in length with a tail at least as long as the body. This mouse weighs 22 to 45 grams. It is distinguished from other field mice by a yellow spot under, and sometimes around, its neck. The fur on its back is fawn-colored, lightly mixed with gray. Its underside is usually pure white, sharply separated from the color of the back.



Species sheet:

## **CAMPAGNOL DES NEIGES/EUROPEAN SNOW VOLE**

*Chionomys nivalis*

Famille : Muridae

### **Geographic range:**

It is present in the mountainous areas of middle and southern Europe.

### **Habitat:**

This vole frequents stony areas, scree, light forests and high mountain pastures.

### **Description:**

The European snow vole is distinguished from other voles by its longer body, as well as its longer tail and ears. It is characterized by thick gray fur merging toward brown on its back, and by a much lighter gray-white color on its underside.



Species sheet:

**CAMPAGNOL ROUSSATRE/BANK VOLE**

*Clethrionomys glaerolus*

Famille : Muridae

**Geographic range:**

It is found throughout Europe and in all of France except the Mediterranean perimeter.

**Habitat:**

The bank vole lives mainly in areas of thick woods, in copses, bramble bushes and ferns. Its habitat generally consists of unused plots of land, dead trees or their broken branches left in place with thick litter.

**Description:**

This vole is 12 to 13 cm long with a tail of 3 cm, and weighs 35 to 45 grams. Its fur is reddish brown on top, gray brown on the flanks and yellowish gray underneath.





## Species sheet:

# CAMPAGNOL AGRESTE/FIELD VOLE

*Microtus agrestis*

Famille : Muridae

## **Geographic range:**

This species is found in Eurasia.

## **Habitat:**

The field vole likes moist habitats. Runways made between clumps of grass lead to the entrances of its tunnels, which are often shallow. It likes to be protected by tall grass. The field vole is often found in prairies, at the edge of fields, in clearings, hedges, thickets, light woods and peat bogs. Piles of green droppings in their runways indicate their presence.

## **Description:**

Like all voles, the field vole has a stocky body and a rounded muzzle. Its length ranges from 8.5 to 13 cm, including its short tail of 2.5 to 4 cm in length. Its fur is gray brown above and darker below. Its neck and feet are greyish white, sometimes tinged with cream color. Its fur is long and bushy, softer to the touch than that of the bank vole. The interior of its ears is downy. The color of its fur and its size vary, depending on its environment.





## Species sheet:

# FOUINE/BEECH MARTEN

*Martes foina*

Famille : Mustelidae

## **Geographic range:**

It is found throughout France.

## **Habitat:**

Its habitat varies according to region. It can live in forests of broad-leaved trees, edges of woods, rocky slopes, mountains below 2300 meters and all other relatively open country. It is equally able to live in inhabited areas like small villages, as well as in urban areas.

## **Description:**

The beech marten is a small member of the mustelidae family, measuring between 66 and 77 cm in length (including a thick tail about 25 cm long). The male, whose adult weight can reach 2.5 kg, is bigger than the female, whose weight does not exceed 1.5 kg. The fur of the beech marten is brown to grayish, except for a white patch under its throat called "the down." The down often splits into two parts, with the white fur continuing part way down the front of its forward legs. Its coat is composed of long hairs, and its feet are not downy.



Species sheet:

**MARTRE DES PINS/WOOD MARTEN**

*Martes martes*

Famille : Mustelidae

**Geographic range:**

The wood marten is found in almost all of western Europe, reaching as far as western Siberia.

**Habitat:**

The marten lives in forested areas of the plains or mountains, whether the trees are conifers, broad-leaved trees or mixed forests.

**Description:**

This marten is a deep brown *Mustelidae* with silky fur and a long body with short legs. Its thick tail represents a third of its total length. The wood marten can be distinguished from the beech marten because the white bib of the wood marten stops at its throat, whereas the white bib of the beech marten continues down its front legs.



## Species sheet:

# HERMINE/ERMINE

*Mustela erminea*

Famille : Mustelidae

## **Geographic range:**

The ermine is found in a large part of Europe, except in the Mediterranean area where the temperatures are too warm for this species.

## **Habitat :**

The ermine is present in many areas where its preferred prey--voles, rabbits and hares-breeds.

## **Description:**

The ermine is thin and adaptable like the shrew, which it greatly resembles. The ermine is identified by its larger size, its proportionally longer and always black- tipped tail and by a clear line of demarcation between the russet of the upper part of its body and the white underside. The total body length for the male is from 16 to 31 cm, with a tail of 6 to 12 cm. The male's weight ranges from 130 to 445 grams; the female's weight from 130 to 280 grams. The ermine's fur becomes white in winter so its predators have difficulty seeing it against the snow.



Summer coat



Winter coat

## Species sheet:

# BELETTE D'EUROPE/COMMON WEASEL

*Mustela nivalis*

Famille : Mustelidae

## **Geographic range:**

The common weasel is found in much of Europe, as well as in North America.

## **Habitat :**

This weasel lives in many environments, ranging from prairies, fields, woods and plains to the mountains, namely wherever it can find prey and shelter.

## **Description:**

The male measures between 17 and 31 cm long and the female from 17 to 20 cm. The common weasel can be confused with the ermine since both species have brown fur above and white on the underside. However, in contrast to the ermine, this weasel's tail is shorter without a black brush at the tip. Moreover, this weasel's fur color doesn't change seasonally, except in northern Europe.





Species sheet:

## MUSARAIGNE ALPINE/ALPINE SHREW

*Sorex alpinus*

Famille : Soricidae

### **Geographic range:**

In France, this species occurs in the massive mountains of the Jura and the Alps.

### **Habitat:**

This shrew is found in mixed forests containing resinous trees and moss growing on soil, and in subalpine prairies sprinkled with rocks having cracks and crevices.

### **Description:**

The alpine shrew is identified by its long tail and entirely gray fur.

