

# Field report – Kos – Greece 16th-23rd September 2012

by Jelle van Aalst

Wanting to have a short break from work on a sunny location for a fair price, my girlfriend and I set off for the Dodecanese island of Kos. It was my first visit to Greece ever and was anxious what to expect (in many ways). While it was not a specific herping trip, I prepared myself to a certain extent with the help of the internet and some literature so I would be able to distinguish which species to encounter and where to look. One of my sources was (the trip report from) Matt Wilson who visited Kos in 2006. While Greece is amongst the countries with the highest number of reptile species in Europe, I soon discovered that Kos is not that much of a 'hotspot' when it comes to herps. Probably one of the reasons why no other report has been posted so far (and where I can make a modest contribution). On the other hand it harbors a few species I had never seen before, like sand boa (*Eryx jaculus*), worm snake (*Typhlops vermicularis*) and Anatolian worm lizard (*Blanus strauchi*), all high on my personal wish list. So all in all it could turn out to be a nice adventure after all (herp wise). Nevertheless, I set off with no high expectations, knowing I would have little time to prospect while spending some quality time with my girlfriend.



Kos as seen from the air(plane) - © Jelle van Aalst

We stayed at Giakalis Apart Hotel near the coastal village of Marmari, in the north of the island. It was ideally situated near the beach and also near a (salt) lake ('Alikes') which is managed as a nature reserve. All within walking distance. Species most likely to encounter here were Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*), Levant Water Frog (*Pelophylax bedriagae*), Starred Agama (*Laudakia stellio*) and Snake-Eyed Lacertid (*Ophisops elegans*). All four species were seen during the first two days and are quite common in this area (the latter seemed quite common on the entire island). Also seen here were Green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Common Tree Frog (*Hyla arborea*), Turkish Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), Balkan Green Lizard (*Lacerta trilineata*) and Red-Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). The rain we encountered on the second day may have contributed to *Bufo viridis* and *Hyla arborea* being (more) active and therefore (easily) spotted in front of our hotel. While in Kos in 2006, Matt Wilson also found two DOR specimens of *Eryx jaculus* not far from our accommodation. Unfortunately and although I flipped many rocks in suitable habitat (e.g. (edges of) olive groves), I did not encounter this species during this trip. Also *Typhlops vermicularis* seemed out of reach and remains on my list of species yet to discover. The surroundings of the lake are popular amongst birders, so herps were not the only creatures to look out for.

Although I walked quite a bit – especially during the morning and evening – to investigate the surroundings in between joint activities we undertook near our hotel, I sometimes used a bicycle which I rented at the hotel to cover more ground. A scooter was rented for a day for sightseeing at the most western part of the island.



Alikes (salt) lake - © Jelle van Aalst



Habitat of *Laudakia stellio* - © Jelle van Aalst



*Laudakia stellio* - © Jelle van Aalst



*Ophisops elegans* - © Jelle van Aalst



*Pelophylax bedriagae* - © Jelle van Aalst