

REPTILES

June marks the return of summer, the sun and the heat in northern hemisphere. This is the best time of the year to meet in our countryside (and even our houses!), some of the most unknown and ill-famed animals of our terrestrial fauna – the reptiles.

Roaming an impressive diversity of shapes, sizes, colors and life strategies, reptiles dispute with birds the title of most diverse group of terrestrial vertebrates. Currently about 10 300 species of reptiles, distributed among turtles, crocodiles, tuataras, lizards and snakes, and roughly 100 new species are described each passing year.

Reptiles are fundamental elements of our ecosystems, as predators and preys of many other animals, as they also act as pest controllers. However, due to cultural and folkloric factors, reptiles are among the most feared and hated group of animals, with many wrong ideas, myths and histories (mostly without any scientific basis) associated to them.

MUHNAC celebrates June selecting some specimens of Portuguese reptiles. In Portugal, are known two species of turtles, three species of geckos (two in the mainland, one in the Selvagens islands, Madeira), one species of chameleon, 14 species of lizards, two species of amphisbaenids and 10 species of snakes, all of them native. In our shores also occur 5 species of marine turtles.

The selected in exhibition show the variety of shapes, sizes and colors, as also to present you the diversity and hidden beauty of these misunderstood animals – the European pond terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*), the Moorish gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*), the Ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*), the Three-toed skink (*Chalcides striatus*), the Mediterranean chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*), the Iberian worm lizard (*Blanus cinereus*), the Montpellier snake (*Malpolon monspessulanus*) and the Horned viper (*Vipera latastei*).

