

DISTRIBUTION

Herpetofauna of Croatia: biodiversity and distribution

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On a surface area of only 56 542 km², making for 0,5% of European territory, Croatia harbours a rich herpetofauna of 21 amphibian and 36 reptile species, which is 26,9% and 34,8% of European species richness, respectively. This relatively high biodiversity can be attributed to a high diversity of habitat types and the position of Croatia in the area of four major European biogeographical regions. Since most of the country was left outside ice-cover in the glacials, it served as one of the refuges for European herpetofauna.

The specificity of Croatian herpetofauna is characterized by:

- high degree of endemism: 11 regionally endemic species and 6 local endemics, 9 species with restricted areals in Europe
- isolation on islands has produced a number of spatially restricted forms of *Podarcis sicula* and *P. melisellensis* whose taxonomic status is still under review, but at least several of them can be considered as endemic subspecies
- edges of species' distribution areals for 16 species
- hybridisation zones for *Pelophylax ridibundus* and *P. lessonae*, *Bombina bombina* and *B. variegata*, *Triturus carnifex* and *T. dobrogicus* and contact zone for *Lacerta bilineata* and *L. viridis*
- eight species listed in IUCN red list, categories NT to EN

The existing literature on herpetofauna in Croatia is scarce and unsystematic. Published data is summarized and previously unpublished data from field workers is gathered to give an account of a current knowledge of herpetofauna distribution. Species distributions and diversity according to biogeographical regions, type of habitat and altitude are given.

