



# La Pélite

*The red gorge shows up in your mailbox when you least expect it.*

## Discovering...

### Reptiles

*Hylonomus lyeli*, the oldest reptile known to man lived 315 million years ago. It was twenty-centimetre long and must have looked like a lizard. It is the first known animal to fully adapt to terrestrial life. Today, when we talk about reptiles, we refer to crocodiles, turtles, lizards, and snakes. Reptiles are inconspicuous creatures, especially snakes, and in the end, it is quite uncommon to accidentally come across one. However, on the reserve, it is possible to observe 3 species of lizards and 6 species of snakes.

Some species of snakes are common: the **Aesculapian snake**, the **grass snake**, the **viperine water snake**, and the **green whip snake**. The former dwells in sunny woods but avoids extreme heat. The others prefer being close to water, especially the viperine snake which eats fish, amphibians and invertebrates. The green whip snake is like a fish in water, but easily slithers its way on land, and can even climb trees. Less common, the **southern smooth snake** lives in habitats with low forest cover. These snakes are harmless to humans, and only the **asp viper** is venomous, but is so rare to stumble upon one in the reserve. As for lizards, the **common wall lizard** and the **European green lizard** are frequent on the reserve. These reptiles are easy to spot when they dart away through the bushes. The **ocellated lizard**, rarer and yet much bigger, knows how to blend with the background, and often goes unnoticed!



Ocellated lizard' © P. Kern

## Meeting...

### An LPO activity leader

Newly arrived, **Nicolas Sergy** is now working for the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Bird Protection League. Before that, he had been working as an "ecoguard" in Calanques National Park, where he rose public awareness of the site's protection issues. He is also a mountain enthusiast and obtained his International Mountain Leader Certificate.

Nicolas gladly joins us on the Alpes d'Azur territory. He will be brought to promote ecotourism. His tasks will also include environmental education. He will work hand in hand with mountain guides and hosts to develop sustainable activities to introduce people to the valuable nature heritage in and out of the reserve.

## Upcoming...

### The rulers of the night

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August**, in Rigaud, the CCAA will

organise free activities about bats as part of its Natura 2000 program.

From 3:30 pm, the town will organise guided tours to explain the historical heritage. Don't be shy, come one, come all!

## Did you know...?

### The ocellated lizard (*Timon lepidus*)

It is Europe's biggest lizard: the male can measure up to 75 centimetres from head to tail. However, it is not easy to spot. This wild animal can detect any hiker strolling too quickly towards its rock. You have to be discreet and use binoculars to observe this breathtaking lizard adorned with black, yellow and green scales, and gorgeous blue ocelli on its flanks. In the reserve, it particularly likes the white rocks scattered along the trails. It sunbathes in the morning and then, goes bug-hunting when its body reaches an ideal temperature.

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