

(Very) short trip to France



This year, during my family holiday in France, I made few short reconnaissance hikes in the Alps and was positively surprised by the number of mammals there.

I would recommend, to anybody interested in Alpine wildlife, the village of Saint-Veran in the Queyras chain, which I suppose might

be called "marmot capital of Europe".

I saw there several dozen of alpine marmots (*Marmota marmota*) in cultivated pastures just above the village, some of them playing with each other, no less than 20 m from the working tractor. I have also observed couple of marmot families along the road (and hiking trail) leading from the village to the Chapelle de Clausis. Most of them were very used to people and not afraid of tourists passing nearby.

Another spot which I recommend to wildlife watchers is the trail leading from the road D64 to the lac de Vens in the Mercantur National Park (*Parc National du Mercantur*), few kilometers above the village of Saint-Etienne-de-Tinee. During my early morning hike I observed no less than 30 alpine chamois (*R. r. rupicapra*) in the valley there. But remember to be early in the morning as hiking in the region is very popular especially in summer months!

In the nearby village of Saint Delmas de Selvage I have also spotted, for the first time in my life, a garden dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*) climbing the wall. A real chance for me as this animal is extremely rare in Poland and known from few localities only. Of course garden dormice are much more common in southern Europe, still usually hard to spot as it is primarily a nocturnal animal.

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