



Protection of the CHAMELEON

You can Collaborate!!!

Of archaic aspect, slow movements and fascinating biology, the common chameleon, respected by farmers and admired by men, suffers in the last decades of a terrible threat: the usurpation of a habitat. Knowing it should lead us to respect it and protect it.



DISTRIBUTION: The family of the chameleonids (CHAMAELEONTIDAE), composed of 85 species, is distributed throughout continental Africa and places near the continent, such as various islands of the Indian Ocean (Madagascar) or riparian countries of the Mediterranean. The species that lives on the Iberian Peninsula is the common or Mediterranean chameleon, already described in the fourth century BC. by Aristotle. Its distribution is circum-Mediterranean: Northern Africa, South Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Mediterranean Islands, Turkey) and the Middle East.

HABITAT: The habitats of the chameleon on the Iberian Peninsula are extraordinarily varied, according to the enormous adaptive plasticity of this species. The chameleon inhabits sheltered coastal or mountainous areas, of mild winters and dry, hot summers. The only limiting factors are the presence of shrub and / or arboreal substrates and climatic benignity. In its western sector, the chameleon shows a certain predilection for the coastal formations of brooms and clarified pine forests, while in Málaga it is often found in olive, almond and / or carob crops, extending inland up to approximately 900 meters of altitude .

ANATOMY: Of archaic and primitive aspect, the common chameleon presents some morphological adaptations that differentiate it from other reptiles: body flattened laterally; long and sturdy legs, ematadas by hands of five opposite fingers, two on one side and three on the opposite; cylindrical tail and prehensile, which is like a fifth member; large and massive head, adorned with horns or crests; eyes with independent movement and stereoscopic vision; and, lastly, speed over its prisoners.

BEHAVIOR: But the most striking thing about chameleons is their ability to vary in design and coloring according to the circumstances. The chromatic change has to do with the decoration, but not always: the light, the environmental temperature and the state of mind intervene as much or more in the choice of the "suit"(liveries) than the desire to go unnoticed. The color changes in the common chameleon are closely related to phenomena such as the state of health, the phase of the reproductive cycle in which they are, and the degree of irritability or stress, as well as the adoption of camouflage strategies, exhibition, courtship or thermoregulation.

REPRODUCTION: The reproductive cycle is also unique. While in other reptiles of the Peninsula the heat period begins shortly after hibernation, and the laying and hatching processes are completed in the same season, before starting a new winter rest, in the common chameleon the reproduction cycle experiences a notable delay in all its phases. In the Iberian Peninsula, the period of estrus usually extends from the end of June to mid-September, with slight modifications depending on the place and the climatic conditions of each year. Most copulations take place during the month of August or the first week of September. The layings can include 5 to 35 eggs, They are carried out mostly in the month of October, occasionally delaying until December. The low temperatures of the months after laying determine that the incubation is prolonged extraordinarily, between 11 and 12 months, so that, in general, hatching does not occur until September or October of the following year. However, the growth of the young is very fast, their weight can quadruple in just one month or month and a half of life.

PROTECTION: Andalusian populations of chameleon are in different degree of conservation in its distribution areas, a total of just over 434 km². While in Malaga (300 km²), with very low densities, the state of the species should be classified as "lower risk", in Cádiz (72 Km²) and Huelva (27 Km²) their status is "vulnerable", due to the destruction of their habitat due to the urban development. The common chameleon is officially catalogued in Spain as a species of "special interest" and appears in the Red Book of the Vertebrates of Spain with the category of "in danger of extinction". "The Ministry of Environment has drafted a Plan for the Conservation of the Chameleon; the conservation of its habitat and, above all, the protection of the areas in which it reproduces, must be the pillars of that plan. In the province of Cádiz the increasing urban pressure and the intensive greenhouses agriculture are leaving chameleons without their natural habitat. What remains of their distribution areas should be maintained as non -developable land.

From the HACE GROUP, we want to contribute with the help to the protection of the chameleons, in an informative way. We do not realize that we are destroying nature, the support of our lives. The life of millions of species, including ours, is at stake. To respect nature is a matter of survival, help us leave a better legacy to future generations.