

Observations of Desman in the Pyrenees 2021

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1 Introduction

The Desman has been on one of the authors wishlist for a very long time. When we decided to visit the Pyrenees in the summer of 2021, we got tipped to visit the site described in reports by [Ben Schwienhart's](#), [Samuel Marlin](#) and [Ben Balmford](#). Via via we also heard of a visit 4 weeks before our visit where a Desman was seen after a wait of 8 hours at the same site.

We planned a visit to the Desman site for three days during a multi-day hike from 2021-08-11 to 2021-08-14. Three of those days were also walking days so we had around 1.5 day to find the Desman.

Finding the Desman using Ben Balmfords's report was easy, or we were just lucky. However, this is a report of our observations and our recommendations. We also link to some video footage, which might help you to understand what kind of observations to expect. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need information.

2 Accomodation

We stayed at Refuge Ayous which we booked well ahead. Some of the personel at the refuge spoke English, bot most of them did not. Our French was poor, but we were able to manage. As stated in earlier reports, camping is allowed during the night.

3 Weather

We had excelent weather conditions. Temperatures up to 30 °C and almost no wind. This gave excelent visibility in the water which was only disturbed by waves for small durations time.

4 Location

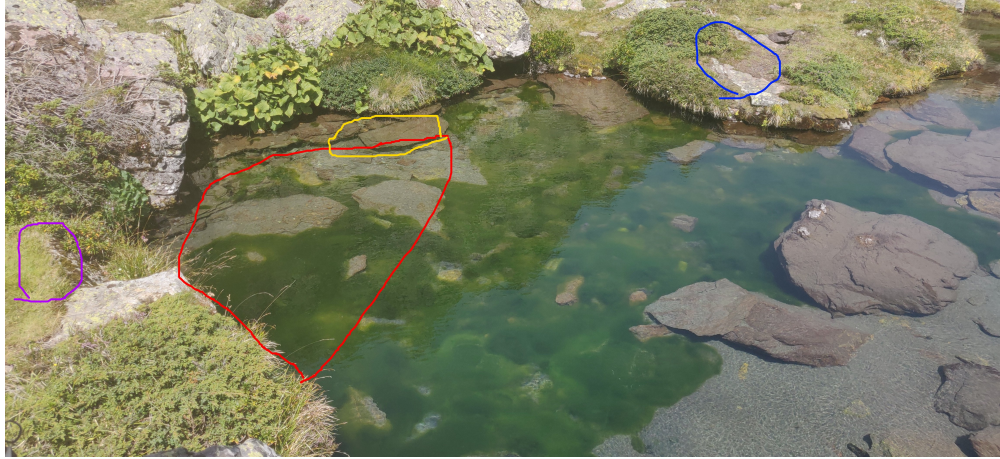
We found the Desman at the site described in the report by Ben Balmford at 42.842123, -0.494634. [Figure 1](#) gives an overview of the site. The red pointer indicates the rock we spend the most time on, providing a reasonable view on the area indicated in red. (This is also the rock which was suggested by Ben Balmford.)

The area indicated in red is the area we saw the Desman the most. The view from the same rock is given in [figure 2](#). This figure also indicates some important sites. Blue is the location we had our first observation from. Red is the area the Desman had spent most its time (we had one observation outside the red area). Purple is the location we made the videos from. Most important is the rock indicated with yellow. This was the rock the Desman appeared from the most times or disappeared the most times.

Figure 1: Desman site at 42.842123, -0.494634. Pointer indicates large rock which gives a good overview (suggested by Ben Balmford). The area indicated with red is the area we saw the Desman in.



Figure 2: View from the rock at the pointer in [figure 1](#). Blue is the location we had our first observation from. Red is the area the Desman had spent most its time. Purple is the location we shot the videos from. Most important is the rock indicated with yellow. This was the rock the Desman appeared from the most times or disappeared the most times.



5 Observations

We had at least 4 observations during 3 hours. Upon arrival at 12:55 we immediately saw the Desman. We still had our backpacks on... I guess we were lucky to find its location this soon. We left satisfied around 16:00. An overview of our observations can be seen in [table 1](#).

We probably saw even more Desman activity. Which were observations of bubbles from underneath rocks only, no observation of the Desman itself.

The area in which the Desman was active was partly covered with water plants. The Desman foraged quite aggressively which moved sediment onto the plants. We only saw this sediment on the location the Desman was active. This might give you an indication whether the Desman is still active or not.

As we already saw the Desman during daylight. We decided not to spotlight. We brought a red filter as we heard that might help in finding the Desman.

6 What to look for

This section will elaborate on what we think you should look for when you are at the site. First look for sediment on top of the algae on the stream's bottom. If it is present, we think a Desman is around. We only saw this at the Desman site described in this and earlier reports.

Time	Duration (min:s)	Notes
12:55	5:00	Multiple short observations upon arrival. Appeared from under the stone indicated with yellow in fig:view.
13:10	0:30	Observation just below the rock, you had to look over the side straight down. Location outside the red region in figure 2 .
13:55	2:00	Appeared in red area in figure 2 just below the area indicated in purple. Dissappeared underneath the stone indicated in yellow.
15:00	10:00	Very long observation. Mostly around the stone indicated in yellow in figure 2 .

Table 1: Table with certain observations of the Desman.

There are several signs that the Desman might come out. Usually we first saw bubbles coming from underneath a stone, near the streams edge. You can see what this looks like on 00:42 in [video 1](#). In this video you will first see some sediment coming from underneath the stone. Then second you will see bubbles coming from underneath the stone. Finally the Desman shows.

In [video 2](#) you can see the foraging behavior of the Desman. It is not always this obvious when it is around but you probably will notice. Sometimes it showed longer than in this video. Usually we saw it for multiple consecutive short moments before it would dissappear for a longer time.

Some of the parts the Desman was active in where in the shade during later parts of the day. Finding bubbles then might be a bit harder.