

Mallorca Trip Report May 9th – 23rd May 2015

By

Bob Shiret



View from Boquer Valley

Introduction

This was our first trip to Mallorca and our plan was to do plenty of walking, wildlife and culture. The holiday was booked through Thompsons and cost around £580 each for half board, flights and transfers, our hotel was the Picafort Park in the resort of Can Picafort which was very good and recommended. Pre-reading included 'A Birdwatching Guide to Mallorca' by Graham Hearl and visiting the www.birdinginspain.com and www.mallorcabirdwatching.com sites as well as the trip reports on the www.realbirder.com website. Whilst in Mallorca I purchased 'Birding Tourists Guide to Mallorca' which is more up to date than Graham Hearl's book and has better maps.

Getting Around

The northern coastal area where Can Picafort is situated has a good local bus service with four buses an hour (from 1st May) plying all the way to Porto Pollensa at a cost of €2.65 each way. This good service meant that most of the birding areas were easily reached by bus albeit with some walking involved. Palma by bus is easy and takes around one and a quarter hours at a cost of €13 return. All the bus timetables are on the operator's website at www.tib.org.

Birdwatching Sites

Hotel Grounds

The Picafort Park Hotel has large grounds with Pine and Palm Trees along with shrubbery and extensive lawns which were watered daily. This meant it was quite good for birdlife which included: **Hoopoe**, **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Blackbird**, breeding **Sardinian Warbler**, **Wood Pigeon**, **Collard Dove**, **Kestrel**, **House Sparrow**.



Spotted Flycatcher (Balearic subspecies)

Boquer Valley

This well known birding walk is accessed from the Formentor road on the northern edge of Port de Pollensa. From a birdwatching perspective it was disappointing as no Eleanor's Falcons, Booted Eagles or Vultures were seen, only bird of note was **Raven**. This walk was worth doing for the views, it was very busy however which may account for the lack of birds.

Son Real

This protected reserve of dunes, Spanish Juniper and Pine Groves starts at the edge of Can Picafort about a five minute walk from our hotel. The gravelled paths inland are accessed from the beach at various places; an information centre is situated at the entrance from the road about 2 km inland from the beach where maps can be obtained showing all the routes and distances. Seen here were **Turtle Dove**, **Spotted Flycatcher** (Balearic subspecies), **Whinchat**, **Woodchat Shrike** (Balearic subspecies), **Red-legged Partridge**, **Linnet**, **Balearic Warbler** (lifer), **Marsh Harrier**, **Hoopoe**, **Tawny Pipit**, **Thekla Lark** (lifer), **Audouin's Gull**, **Shag**, **Kestrel**, **Yellow-legged Gull**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Stonechat**, **Little Egret**, **Greenfinch**, **Kentish Plover**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Red-footed Falcon**, **Pheasant**.



Balearic Warbler



Audouin's Gull



Thekla Lark



Tawny Pipit



Kentish Plover



Red-footed Falcon

Son Bosc

This area is best accessed from the main Can Picafort - Alacudia road: by bus, get off at 'Camping Muro' the first stop after leaving Can Picafort, then walk along the road for 15 minutes until a track on the left is reached behind which are two saltpans. If travelling by car then there is room for a few cars to park at the entrance. The saltpans held **Whimbrel**, **Shelduck**, **Coot**, **Moorhen**, and **Black-winged Stilt** whilst over the water there were **Swift**, **Pallid Swift**, **Swallow** and **House Martin**. Walking past the saltpans between the reed beds were **Fan-tailed Warbler**, and **Water Rail**. At the end of the track is a large house and the path veers off to the right and continues into some good mixed habitat. Seen here were: breeding **European Bee-eater**, **Pied Flycatcher**, **Short-toed Lark** (lifer), **Hoopoe**, and **Marsh Harrier**.



Whimbrel



European Bee-eater

Depuradora



View from road to Depuradora

This area contains the local sewage works and has two large pools which can be viewed from a high observation tower. I walked there from the bus stop detailed in the Son Bosc description; it takes around fifty minutes and goes through some interesting farmland. To get there from the bus stop walk back to the roundabout at the outskirts of Can Picafort, turn right and then after 100m turn right again and continue for about 1 km along a path just inside the forest. When a bus repair depot on the right is reached, turn right down the lane, very few cars use this road. At the end of this road is a sign to the left indicating the viewing tower. On my short visit were seen: **Marsh Harrier**, **Whiskered Tern** (lifer), **Mallard**, **Little Grebe**, **European Bee-eater**, **Pochard**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Hoopoe**, **Cetti's Warbler** and many **Nightingale**. Imagine my surprise whilst walking along the road to see a massive **Golden Eagle** rising up being harassed by three **Marsh Harrier**, unfortunately I was to find out later that it was an escapee!



Marsh Harrier



Serin

Albufereta (Southern)

To get to this site, get off the bus at the first stop outside of Alacudia at the 'Club Pollentia' and walk back along the road until a bend with safety barriers is reached, turn right up a track here to reach the reserve area. This reserve was visited just once in our second week and I suspect most of the migrants had moved on. Birds seen were: Corn Bunting, Linnet, Common Tern, breeding Black-winged Stilt, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Redshank, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Yellow Wagtail.

Albufera



This large wetland reserve is one of the most famous in Europe and this was our first visit. We visited four times for no longer than two hours a visit and kept away at weekends as I had read it gets too crowded. The bus stop is right outside the entrance and the walk to the information centre is 1 km. There is a small car park near the entrance that looked full every visit we made, no visitor cars were allowed on the reserve. At the information centre free maps are available, a map is essential for finding your way around the reserve. In general we found that the hides near the information area were most productive, particularly the Sa Rocha hide. One very important note for visiting birders is when to visit; our first visit was on 11th May and the birding was truly exceptional, a week later and most of the migrating birds had gone and by the end of that week a visiting birder would have been very disappointed. Rather than give a massive list of birds in the text, I have put interesting birds seen in the locations and more common birds in a species list in this section of the report.

Sa Roca Hide (10)

Birds seen here were two **Great Snipe** (lifer), three **Temminck's Stint** (lifer), **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Purple Heron**, **Marbled Duck** (lifer), **Kentish Plover**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Whiskered Tern** (lifer), **Common Tern**, **Shelduck**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Collared Pratincole** (lifer), **Garganey**, **Little Stint**, breeding **Black-winged Stilt**, **Greenshank**.



Great Snipe



Whiskered Tern



Marbled Duck



Wood Sandpiper



Marsh Sandpiper



Temminck's Stint



Collared Pratincole



Black-winged Stilt and **Red Crested Pochard**

This breeding Stilt was seeing off the **Pochards**, a few minutes later it scared off a **Little Egret** that came too close.



Curlew Sandpiper and **Little Ringed Plover**

Es Cibollar Hide (11)

Interesting birds seen here were: **Spotted Redshank**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Common Tern**, two flyover migrating **Osprey** (lifer).

Sa Roca Bridge

From this bridge very good views were had of **Red-knobbed Coot** (lifer), **Purple Gallinule** (lifer) and **Purple Heron**.



Purple Gallinule



Red-knobbed Coot

Main Entrance Track (8)

Birds seen walking along this busy track were: **Osprey** flyover (very close), **Night Heron**, **Cattle Egret**, **Little Egret**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Nightingale**, **Eleonora's Falcon** (lifer).



Osprey

This shot was taken on our first visit as we walked up the main entrance track!



Eleonora's Falcon

Es Ras Hide (13)

Birds seen from here were: **Stone Curlew** (to the far left of hide by fence) and **Yellow Wagtail**.

Es Canal Gran Hide (14)

This little visited hide is on the main canal, I visited only once on my last visit and was lucky to see a nesting **Little Bittern** (lifer), although I was the only person in the hide and 50m away this bird was extremely wary. Also seen on the river were three **Gadwall**. List of some of the more common birds seen in the Albufera reserve: **Cormorant**, **Mallard**, **Moorhen**, **Coot**, **Feral Rock Dove**, **White Wagtail**, **Blackcap**, **Great Tit**, **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch**, **Linnet**, **Chaffinch**, **Cormorant**.



Little Bittern

Palma

We visited Palma on two occasions, the first was a bright hot sunny day and we were surprised to see a pair of **Peregrine** soaring and stooping over the cathedral. There were also hundreds of hirundines including **Swallow**, **House Martin**, **Crag Martin**, **Swift** and **Pallid Swift** over the cathedral and **Yellow-legged Gull** in the Harbour. On our second visit, a much cloudier day one of the **Peregrines** was seen to take a **Feral Rock Dove** and devour it on a tower.



Peregrine with prey

Other Wildlife

Butterflies were not particularly abundant and most were seen at Albufera and included: [Swallowtail](#), [Cleopatra](#), [Speckled Wood](#), a few [Whites](#) and many [Clouded Yellows](#) and [Painted Ladies](#). No [lizards](#) were seen but a nice [Viperine Snake](#) crossed our path on the Albufera reserve. [Several Hermann's Tortoise](#) were seen on the Sou Real reserve.



[Speckled Wood](#) (*P.a.aegeria*)



Herman's Tortoise



Viperine Snake

Summary

We really enjoyed our first holiday in Mallorca; from a birding point of view perhaps a week earlier would be preferable, which is ideal as that is when the summer bus timetables begin and the larger travel companies begin their holidays. Ninety five percent of the guests in our hotel were sun-seekers and for the most part were OK with temperatures around 65⁰f, a few days were cold and windy and any rain was at night. For a birder with a family it is an ideal destination as the birding is local and the beaches good for children. Eleven lifers in one trip was achieved without too much effort and we are already looking to book and return next year.