

**Family holiday to Port de Pallenca – northern
Mallorca –26th May to 2nd June 2007.
by Martin Blow**

Day One

Arrived late afternoon and unpacked – there are **Spotted Flycatchers** everywhere, dozens. There was a nest on our balcony so we get cracking close up views within feet.



Bocquer Valley

Day Two

It's a bit cloudy first thing. Not quite warm enough for the beach or the pool. Luckily we are based about five minutes walk from the entrance to the Bocquer Valley. This is a well known birding hot spot, and a nice walk. It is stony under foot at its base and on an incline but is fine for all but the most unsteady on their feet. You have to walk through some gates of a private 'finca' (villa) and don't be put off by the gates as it is a public right of way. Just makes sure you close the gates behind you and don't hang about in front of the building.



Bocquer Valley

The valley is very rocky with some dense scrub in places. The first bird I hear and then quickly locate is a **Cirl Bunting**, perched on a post singing its head off. The cloud is already starting to burn off and the kids are getting impatient to head back to the pool. As we turn a **Booted Eagle** drifts over the mountain ridge. Not far from the gates back into the 'finca' a small dark bird flits in front of us and provided good views before burying itself in dense

undergrowth. Luckily I get my bins onto it for a few seconds, a smart **Subalpine Warbler**.

The sun is now shining and it is getting hot. We get back through the 'finca' and lean against the wall in the shade for 5 minutes. Another British birder has already had the same idea. He tells me that the previous day from this very spot he had two Black Vultures and over twenty Booted Eagles together drift over the ridge and directly over his head. As we sit here I notice a bird in the orchard on our right, the first of many **Woodchat Shrikes** we see during the week.

Back to pool by 12pm, the kids are happy, the flycatchers are everywhere and a **Serin** is perched on top of tree above our heads singing its heart out.

In a taxi that evening on the way to a restaurant we pass the Alberfueta, and there right by the road is a **Night Heron**. Unfortunately we passed it at 50mph!

Day Three

We found the entrance to Alberfueta more by luck than judgement and almost gave up after being dropped about a mile short of where we wanted to be. En route along the beach we had **Audouin's Gulls** and a number of **Kentish Plovers**. We found a hide but by now the kids were getting restless so off they all went to find some ice creams and left me in the hide. I had about a glorious 45 minutes during which time I had cracking views of **Night Heron**, a fishing **Osprey**, numerous zitting **Fan-tailed Warblers**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Purple Heron**, **Cattle Egret**, **Peregrine** and very colourful dark headed **Yellow Wagtails**. It was certainly worth the effort.

I was told that Formentor Lighthouse was worth a visit but you need a car to get there. Apparently it is "crawling" with Blue Rock Thrushes!

Day Four

Albefuera Marsh Reserve is the main wetland birding site on Mallorca. We took a taxi from the bus station in Port de Pallenca at around 6am and 30 minutes and 20e (£13) later we were at the entrance to the reserve. The reserve is accessible by foot 24/7 and there is parking around 100m further up the main road. The main path into the reserve runs along side a river for about 1km before veering off towards the visitor centre where there are toilets. Along this path we had many **Night Herons** as well as **Sardinian Warblers** that darted across in front of us. Cetti's Warblers were singing everywhere.



Albefuera Marsh

We headed to the first hide (to the left of the visitors centre as you approach it) and from outside had brilliant close up views of an **Eleonora's Falcon** hunting the many midges about. Here's a tip, take plenty of insect repellent, even at 7am we were bitten all over. The last time I was here I saw **Stone Curlew** in the field to left of the hide and sure enough, there they were once again. From the hide you overlook a large wetland, with perhaps a little too much water. There were **Kentish Plovers** and **Black Winged Stilts** within feet and dozens of **Red-crested Pochards**. To our right we found a huge **Purple Gallinule** and **Purple Herons** passed overhead.

You reach the next hide by crossing back over the river and amazingly without any effort we found the newly reintroduced **Crested Coot**, unmistakably bigger than its common cousin, and has a large white radio tagged necklace on. We were apparently quite lucky to see this bird as everyone else we spoke to that day had not seen it.

Unfortunately the Tower Hide was shut for refurbishment but the other hides produced five **Marbled Ducks**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Fan-tailed Warblers** and many, many more **Stilts** and **KPs**. **Purple** and **Night Herons** and **Cattle Egrets** continued to fly over.

Back by the visitor centre I pointed out the Stone Curlews to a Danish birder and asked if he had seen any **Bee-eaters**. He said that there was a good chances a few kilometres up the road. I explained that we did not have a car and he kindly offered to take us. We jumped in and headed up the coast road. Within ten minutes we pulled in on the left. There is a sign there that says 'Sillot'. I believe this may mean sewage in Spanish? A rough bumpy road led in land (passed a sewage farm!) until after about 1km we came to a clearing. This looked ideal for Bee-eater with sand banks all around. In front a **Woodchat Shrike** sat on a dead tree within 20m of us and **Stonechats** were everywhere. Our Danish friend said he was going off to take some photographs and would pick us up in about an hour.

There were **Eleonora's Falcons** everywhere. I counted 14 in view at one time. By now it was getting seriously hot so we headed for some shade. After ten minutes or so there it was, a glorious techni-coloured **Bee-eater** sitting on an overhead wire. It provided great views catching insects and returning to its favoured spot for ten minutes. All of a sudden a Hoopoe pops up and heads

in the same direction. Amazingly both birds stop almost together and we had both in the same bins at once! Then, within feet of them a **Woodchat Shrike**. Imagine that in Britain, a Bee-eater, Hoopoe and Woodchat Shrike viewable together. It wasn't going to get much better than that. Further views of another **Bee-eater**, including one low overhead, and a **Woodchat** kept us entertained until as promised our lift arrived. It took us about an hour to get home via taxi, and we were back by the pool at 11.30am. Not bad for four hours birding!

Day Five

No birding today. Went on a boat trip to Formentor and saw **Audouin's Gulls** from the mariner. Came back by bus (very cheap but infrequent) with stunning views from the mountain tops and picked up a **Booted Eagle** on route.

Day Six

Again a lazy day by the pool but did pick up an **Eleonora's Falcon** overhead. Saw a bird I found difficult to ID today from the balcony in the trees around the pool. After studying my Collins I plumped for Olivaceous Warbler, but I am not sure. That one beat me I'm afraid!

Day Seven

Up at 6.30am and off up the Bocquer Valley. Again in the same orchard sat a **Woodchat Shrike**. I still have not seen one in the UK. Hopefully it will not be too long. Walking quietly through the gated area, there sits another **Woodchat Shrike**, this time much closer within 3m or so. Fantastic! I walked for some way up the valley, through the scrub with **Sardinian Warblers** and **Cirl Buntings** dotted all over the place. I heard many more than I saw.



Bocquer Valley

I had been told that the far end of the valley was the best place for **Balearic Marmora's Warbler** and sure enough I found one where the valley drops down towards the sea. Heading back, with no great surprise I re-found the **Woodchat Shrike** back in the orchard. I was back by 9am for breakfast.

Day Eight

Time to head home. I birded from the coach to the airport and picked up **Hoopoe**, **Black Kite**, **Eleonora's Falcon** and an eagle sp. that was too far away to ID.

We booked the holiday via Upminster Travel and stayed in the Maricel Apartments. The apartments were really nice, two mins from the beach, on the east side of town, less than five mins from the bus terminal in one direction and the Pine Walks in the other. For more details of where we stayed, ate etc contact me at martin.blow@ntlworld.com

Trip list:

Spotted Flycatcher	Peregrine Falcon
Cirl Bunting	Fan Tailed Warbler
Woodchat shrike	Sardinian Warbler
Serin	Balearic Mamora's Warbler
Audouin's Gull	Subalpine Warbler
Yellow Legged Gull	Cetti's Warbler
Black Winged Stilt	Red Crested Pochard
Kentish Plover	Purple Gallinule
Curlew Sandpiper	Crested Coot
Stone Curlew	Marbled Duck
Night Heron	Bee Eater
Purple Heron	Yellow Wagtail
Grey Heron	Goldfinch
Cattle Egret	Blackbird
Little Egret	Stonechat
Osprey	Great Tit
Booted Eagle	House Sparrow
Eleonora's Falcon	Linnet
Black Kite	Swallow
Marsh Harrier	House Martin
Kestrel	