

Family Trip to Port Du Pollenca North East Mallorca
24th to 31st May 2008
By Martin Blow

Introduction

Myself, my wife, Julia and kids; Sophie (10) and Jamie (8), visited Port Du Pollenca in north east Mallorca for the third May half term in a row. This is a great resort for families with children, and birders! There is a very relaxed atmosphere as well as many good birding sites.

Day 1

We arrive late afternoon at Palma airport. It's been raining all day and has just stopped. We jump into our taxi for the 45 minute transfer to Port Du Pollenca. Birding from the off I scanned the skies and scenery and as well as a few common species managed brief views of a **Woodchat Shrike** on telegraph wires, a **Sardinian Warbler** whilst stopped at traffic lights and the first of many **Spotted Flycatchers**. By the time we arrived at our accommodation and freshen up it is dark. We head out to dinner before returning to unpack.

Day 2

The weather is not great, but at least it is dry and warm (not hot!). The kids were desperate to get to the pool so despite the lower than expected temperatures they were splashing around for the most of the morning. I decided to head off to the Boquer Valley around lunch time. The entrance is just 400 metres from our apartments so impromptu trips are always on the cards. I grabbed my bins, scope and camera and headed off for a couple of hours.

The area around the entrance to the Boquer Valley can often be very productive. It is worth checking the area just to the left of the path as I had never failed to see **Woodchat Shrike** here on my two previous holidays. Not today though. **Gold and Greenfinches** were plentiful as were **House Sparrow** and **Spotted Flycatchers**. Heading through the two sets of gates at the finca I enter the valley itself. **Cirl Bunting** can be heard already and I doesn't take long to locate one singing just 20 feet away.



The walk through the valley is no more than a mile and not too difficult underfoot. I pass other birders and walkers and chat. No one had seen much although there were reports of a **Blue Rock Thrush** singing, but it had not

been seen. Every 10 minutes or so something sculky catches my eye and upon closer inspection each time it turns out to be a **Sardinian Warbler**. Eventually after still checking each bird and towards the end of the valley one is a **Mamoras Warbler**. Brief but half decent views are had before it disappears into one of the many bushes dotted along the walk.

Turning back I see **Crag Martins** distantly at the top of the steep valley wall and a **Peregrine Falcon** appears in my bins as study the Martins. One final unsuccessful check for **Woodchat Shrike** in the usual place and I am back by the pool within 2 hours.

A walk along the front deciding what to have for dinner produces both **Audouine's** and **Yellow Legged Gulls**. The weather deteriorated during the evening and it rained most of the night.

Day 3

Day 3 began pretty much as had day 2 with the kids desperate for the pool. As we had breakfast on the balcony a bird flew right in front of us. It had a black and white stripy face and a long tail. With pretty good flight views imbedded in our minds we checked the Collins immediately. The bird was a **Rock Bunting**. Not uncommon but the first I had seen in three trips. Breakfast on the balcony also produced **Common Buzzard** and more **Spotted Flycatchers**.

With the weather still not great we decided to hire a car to see a bit more of the island before the heat wave arrived! We picked up our 2 week old Corsa (approx £100 for 4 days) 30 minutes later. The kids played in the pool all morning and after a quick lunch back at the apartment we decided to head to Albufuera Marsh. Situation around 20 miles to the south of us, this is one of the best birding sites in Mallorca. I had visited on a few occasions previously but never with the family so we decided to all pay a visit. Ironically as we headed out the clouds parted and the sun shone. The kids were already pinning for the pool as we parked just off the main road about 50 yards from the main entrance. There is a long straight track (2/3 mile) that leads away from the road along side a river that takes you into the main reserve. Within 2 minutes of getting out of the car we have our first **Hoopoe** in flight over our heads. Along the river an **Osprey** fished within 100 yards and Marsh Harrier hunt the reed beds. As the track bends to the left 20+ **Cattle Egrets** make a racket in the trees on the opposite side of the river. A closer look finds 6 **Night Heron** amongst them. We continue along the track as **Fan Tailed Warblers** zit overhead. **Cettis Warblers** are heard everywhere.



This is a big reserve with a number of hides. Realistically the kids (and Julia) will not want to spend hours on end walking the whole reserve so I strategically decide to head to the main (CIM) hide. In the past this hide has been very productive, providing good close views of many of the sites specialities. We were not to be disappointed as right in front of the hide we had many **Black Winged Stilt**, **Kentish Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Common Tern** and **Red Crested Pochard**.



The first **Eleanors Falcon** of the trip hunted high over the reed beds and closer examination produced three more a little further back. A **Ruff** flew in to add to the list. Other birds from this hide included **Grey Heron**, **Coot**, **Moorhen** and **Little Egret**. Back by the visitors centre I check the field adjacent to the CIM hide for **Stone Curlew** as I have seen them here on each previous occasion. Sure enough there it was, I'm sure in exactly the same spot. I was actually quite relieved when it moved and headed out of site.



We walked to the main bridge where we had close view of the re-introduced **Crested (Knobbed) Coot**.



A fly by **Little Bittern** was a nice but brief sight and **Nightingales** seemed to be everywhere. The first **Purple Heron** of the trip flew just up river and **Great Tit** was added to the trip list.

We left Albefuera and headed just 1.5 miles further south to a sight I had previously had good views of **Woodchat Shrike** and **Bee eater**. Neither my wife or kids had seen **Bee eater** previously so I was keen to try and find some of the beautifully coloured birds for them. Off of the main road heading towards Cal' Picafort we turn off at a disused sewage works.



We headed down the bumpy track eventually after a few bends appearing in a quite uninspiring clearing. Some rubbish has been dumped and there are a couple of derelict houses in the area. Around 100 yards away are telegraph wires which have produced **Bee eater** and Shrike previously. Within 10 minutes the first bird appeared, a **Bee eater**. We drove around half way to the wires to get better views and the birds seemed comfortable with this. We all

had great views of up to **6 Bee eater**. The scrubby area also produced 2 **Stone Curlew** that we disturbed as we left the area and on the 300 yard straight section of the track 3 **Woodchat Shrikes** appeared. The area also added **Linnet** and **Stonechat** to the trip list.

Day 4

I woke early as had the morning to myself and headed back to the Abefuera Marsh. After getting lost I arrived 40 minutes later at 6.20am. Even in the half light I could see it was going to be another poor day weather wise. I headed along the main path and straight to the CIM Hide. I had many of the same birds as seen the previous day but added a **Sacred Ibis** and a **Little Stint** from my first stop.



Still no **Purple Gallinule** however. It began to rain so checked out the other hides which added **Marbled Duck** to the trip list. I left Abuefera after 2 hours and I had not seen a single other person during this time. Within 10 minutes I was pulling off the road back at the **Bee eater** site. On the track directly in front of me was a **Hoopoe** feeding in the scrub, each time I tried to drive past it ran another 10 yards until after playing cat and mouse for 100 yards it had had enough and flew and landed with a second bird in scrub just off the path. The **Bee eaters** did not disappoint again with 3 individuals this time and 3 **Woodchat Shrikes**, all sitting on the telegraph wires. I notice a large pipit ahead of me and I deduce it must be a **Tawny Pipit** from it's slim and wagtail like appearance. As I leave the **Stone Curlews** put in an appearance and I head off home.



After lunch with the weather not improving greatly we all head off to Formentor lighthouse. The drive of around 15 miles provides spectacular views but is at times quite scary, with big drops and small barriers along the way. It is not for the faint hearted. Eventually we arrived at the lighthouse and stop for photos and a cuppa. I was desperate to find **Blue Rock Thrush** and I knew this would be my best chance. Within 20 yards of the car park there looked to be a good view point down over a rocky, scrubby area, so I grabbed my bins peered over the wall. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed a blue blob about 50 yards away on the ground and as soon I check through the bins I was excited to find my first ever **Blue Rock Thrush**, an absolutely beautiful looking bird that seemed at first to be motionless. I ran back to grab the telescope from the boot of the car and headed back only to be told by my wife that it had flown off. A quick scan on the trees and I relocated it closer this time and it allowed around 15 minutes of good views. This bird really made my day. Pleased with myself we headed back to spend a couple of hours around the pool. Still no sun though.



Day 5

Again the weather was grey and not what we had hoped for. We went for a drive to Cal'an Picafort. I had been told the previous day that a **Gull Billed Tern** was seen regularly in the harbour area so I kept a look out. Audines Gulls were again walking along the beach and 2 **Shag** hunted in front of the rocks as the waves broke. Then I noticed the tern, on its own it hunted in the harbour for 2 minutes and then flew off steadily along the beach and out of sight. Checking the Collins for ID as I watched it I was pleased to add **Gull Billed Tern** to the list.

We had to drive past the entrance to the **Bee eater** site on the way home so it would have been rude not to stop and again we had great views of **Woodchat Shrike** and **Bee eater**, a party of 8 this time. On the way out my wife said there was big bird sitting on the edge of the old sewage works and I was pleased to have the best views of **Purple Heron** of the holiday. In fact this was the only non flight view I had. They seem to have become a lot scarcer over the last few years. In this small area were also half a dozen **Black Winged Stilts**, a **Cattle Egret** and a **Marbled Duck**.

Day 6

At last we have blue sky and sunshine. We spend the morning in the pool. Around 2pm I decide to try my luck for possibly the last time for an Eagle or a Vulture back at the Boquer Valley. A quick walk produced many of the usual suspects, **Sandinian Warbler** and **Cirl Bunting** as well as good close views of **Peregrine**. Giving up I head back and as I turner the corner to the apartments I look back to see my first **Booted Eagle** of the trip about 200 yards away and where I had just been standing. Still gaining decent views I watch for 5 minutes until it drifts back up the valley.

We head up to Alcudia old town for dinner. An **Osprey** provides great views carrying a fish over our car as we head out.

Day 7

I returned the car today and as we had a second day of sunshine and good temperatures to stay around the pool on out last day.

Day 8

It was no great surprise to head back to airport at 8am in the rain as yet again the weather turned for the worse. It had been the wettest May on record for Mallorca, and the 4th Saturday in a row of rain.

It was still a very enjoyable holiday despite the weather not being as good as it could have been. The birding in this area is great and easy to mix with a traditional family holiday around the pool or beach. One word of caution however is with the Pound not being as strong against the Euro it was however noticeably more expensive when compared to previous years.

Trip List 24th May – 31st May 2008:

Little Egret	Grey Heron
Cattle Egret	Night Heron
Spotted Flycatcher	Purple Heron
House Sparrow	Little Bittern
Cirl Bunting	Black Winged Stilt
Rock Bunting	Kentish Plover
Crag Martin	Ringed Plover
Swallow	Red Crested Pochard
House Martin	Marbled Duck
Sand Martin	Teal
Goldfinch	Mallard
Greenfnch	Moorhen
Audines Gull	Coot
Yellow Legged Gull	Crested Coot
Blackbird	Nightingale
Common Buzzard	Great Tit
Peregrine Falcon	Bee eater
Kestel	Woodchat Shrike
Booted Eagle	Linnet
Osprey	Ruff
Eleonoras Falcon	Little Stint
Serin	Stone curlew
Hoopoe	Wren
Fan Tailed Warbler	Wood Pigeon
Cettis Warbler	Shelduck
Sardinian Warbler	Gadwall
Mamoras Warbler	Carrion Crow
Shag	Yellow Wagtail
Sacred Ibis	Common Sandpiper
Blue Rock Thrush	Skylark
Snipe	Sandwich Tern
Tawny Pipit	Gull Billed Tern