

HOLIDAY BIRDWATCHING FROM THE HIBISCUS APARTMENT

Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca

24th April to 1st May 2007

There are many areas throughout Mallorca to find a great variety of natural habitats. If you are on a dedicated birdwatching trip then it is feasible to take in many of the sites within a week, of course two weeks is always better. If you are enjoying a family holiday at the Hibiscus Apartment then your time to birdwatch will be more limited but it is a perfect base to visit some excellent local hot spots. Spring and autumn are the best times to visit as migrating species of birds add to the array of resident species that you might find.

Below is an account of birds encountered during a family holiday on the above date. They are represented under these separate headings: local, the Boquer Valley, Mountains around LLuc and Albufera Natural Park.

LOCAL BIRDS

From the comfort of your balcony, amongst the pine trees, the dominating sound of the day was the relentless singing of serin, goldfinch and greenfinch with a zitting cisticola present some days too. House sparrow, swallow, swift, collard dove and spotted flycatcher were commonly on view. From the roof terrace a more panoramic view of the surrounding mountains and coast opens up the opportunity for sightings of raptors. On this occasion a passing osprey (carrying a fish) and a migrating, high altitude flock of bee-eaters were the highlights.

On every evening the song of the nightingale could be heard from the balcony and on the first evening a scops owl called from nearby. By far the loudest evening chorus was that of frogs from a site just across the road.

Whilst enjoying the beach you could see sandwich tern, yellow-legged and audouin's gull on the rocky outcrop every time and little egret and shag sometimes. It is possible to see a hunting osprey over the bay, we were lucky enough to witness one plunge into the water to pluck out a fish. It was from the beach that one of the week's five passing bee-eater flocks was encountered, again at high altitude.

BOQUER VALLEY

The Boquer valley is a very steep sided valley and is only a few minutes drive from the apartment. With a family it was best to leave them behind and visit early in the morning before breakfast. Low lying arable land meets the coastal mountains here and the valley seems to act like a funnel, concentrating passage birds and also providing a mix of local resident birds. A path along it's length is elevated and gives you a good prospect onto the valley bottom. During passage time things can change every day and also within a day. Below is a list of birds recorded from all of the four visits:-

Black vulture	Barn owl	Black eared wheatear	Pied flycatcher
Booted eagle	Swift	Whinchat	Great tit
Black kite	Hoopoe	Stonechat	Woodchat shrike
Kestrel	Bee-eater	Blue rock thrush	Raven
Eleonora's falcon	Crag martin	Blackbird	House sparrow
Peregrine	Swallow	Sardinian warbler	Chaffinch
Stone curlew	Wren	Marmora's warbler	Goldfinch
Yellow legged gull	Dunnock	Garden warbler	Serin
Wood pigeon	Redstart	Willow warbler	Cirl bunting
Marsh harrier	Wheatear	Spotted flycatcher	

ALBUFERA NATURAL PARK

A massive wetland site where you could quite possibly spend all week and not see every corner. Because of its size many people ride around the many paths on bicycle. The place has a good visitor centre with a toilet block but if you are there for a long time take a packed lunch. There is little shelter and so take protection against the sun, dehydration and insect bites. There are hides and vantage points in many places. We walked and therefore our account of sightings is limited to the central area of the reserve, below is a record of birds seen on two visits:

Little grebe	Red crested Pochard	Stone curlew	Wood pigeon
Grey heron	Coot	Sand martin	Blackbird
Purple heron	Moorhen	House martin	Great tit
Cattle egret	Crested coot	Swallow	Yellow wagtail
Little egret	Black winged stilt	Swift	Cetti's warbler
Night heron	Little ringed plover	Osprey	Reed warbler
Cormorant	Kentish plover	Marsh harrier	Great reed warbler
Mallard	Greenshank	Whiskered tern	Sardinian warbler
Gadwall	Common sandpiper	Common tern	Zitting cisticola
Shoveler	Green sandpiper	Yellow legged gull	Nightingale
Pochard	Wood sandpiper	Kestrel	House sparrow
			Goldfinch

CAP DE FORMENTOR

A stunning drive to the tip of the mountainous outcrop is a must do activity and also a place to see birds, if you can take your eyes off the road. On the lighthouse view point we encountered crag martins, there can't be a more suitable setting for these little dusky chaps, and another passing flock of bee-eaters. On the journey up there we came across buzzard and kestrel with crossbills in the forested section just past the Formentor beach entrance.

LLUC

Another wonderful mountain drive from your apartment. It is only a thirty minute journey but the scenery stays with you forever. LLuc attracts tourists to its monastery but there is also a centre of conservation there that gives good information on the black vulture conservation project amongst other things. It is also a good place to see these vultures as they breed locally. We were unlucky on the day we went but did see live footage beamed in from a hidden camera alongside a nest site only two and a half kilometres away, at this time there were no eggs on the nest but we did see both the parent birds. We also saw a pair firecrest around the children's park and on our way up we heard our only blue tit of the trip.

SUMMARY

Plenty of opportunities to mix birdwatching within your holiday, you do not have to go far. One thing that stands out above the memories and discoveries of your trip is that wherever you are, trying to see or hear the bird life, whether successful or not, you are always in a wonderful setting. The mountains, the wetlands, the coast or the lush farmland provide your senses with a feast to becalm your soul.