



TOUR REPORT

Mallorca and Cabrera Autumn Tour

18th – 25th September 2021

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SATURDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER - AIRPORT TRANSFER AND AUMALLIA HOTEL

We're back in action with our second foreign tour since the start of the pandemic! And it's great to be back and running. A full complement of tour participants joined us for our second autumn Mallorca Tour, flying in from London and, for one participant, New York via Madrid. Despite short delays to both flights, all arrived roughly at the same time, and despite the addition of needing to show Covid control form, the run through passport control and luggage was smooth. Once we had all met in arrivals, we were soon at the van and on our way. A 45 minute run down to our new hotel in Son Provenç near Felanitx, and after a welcome lemon juice and being shown to the rooms, we were soon out for our first taste of birding the countryside surrounding the Aumallia Hotel.

A mosaic of vineyards, almond orchards and fallow cereal fields, the area yielded some nice bits. **European Bee-eater** was noted on wires just before the hotel, while a very smart male **Balearic Woodchat Shrike** performed superbly alongside the vineyard opposite, giving great views in the low evening light. A taste of the other local species was had, with abundant **Corn Buntings** singing and passing in good number to roost, while **Wryneck**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Girl Bunting** and **Stone Curlew** were all heard. As the light faded, we headed in for a cold beer, a delicious 3 course meal and then bed, after a wearying day of travel for the group.

SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER - SOUTHERN MALLORCA

Today started with a dawn walk through the surroundings of the hotel, with us out at 07:30 and strolling up the quiet narrow lanes. The walk proved productive, with an impressive array of migrants noted, despite our position well inland. One of the first birds picked up was a **Tawny Pipit**, initially heard and the spotted on a wire fence line bordering open fields. A couple of **Tree Pipits** were also heard, and a juvenile **Whinchat** also shared the same fence line here. **European Bee-eaters** were heard but not seen, as was a **Wryneck**, while further Corn Buntings were noted in abundance. A productive half hour! We soon had to head into breakfast, but once finished, we made our way out for our first excursion of the day, to the coastal harbour town of Portocolom.

Just 10 minutes down the road, we were soon arriving at the picturesque old harbour of Portocolom (having noted a single **Nightingale** in flight from the van as we left the hotel). Parking up besides the s'Arenalet de Es Babo, we noted our first **Mediterranean Shags** (*ssp desmarestii*) and **Audouin's Gull** of the trip, before walking into the garrigue of s'Algar. Entering from the western side, we crossed the old fig groves, which on some days can host reasonable numbers of migrant species. Today however was quiet, and in fact with heavy grey skies and a bit of a breeze, it was all looking rather quiet. **Balearic Common Crossbills** (an endemic subspecies of Common Crossbill) were heard and seen in flight on a number of occasions, with at least 4 seen. Sardinian Warblers were one of the few other vocal species which didn't seem to mind the grey skies, with our main target for this site; the Balearic Warbler, proving initially elusive and silent. Working through some ideal habitat and remaining patient, we eventually crossed paths with 3 **BALEARIC WARBLERS**, which despite calling lots, and one individual even giving an exaggerated false song flight (tail cocked and elaborate wing flapping, but without singing!), we struggled to get a decent view of them. After a good 15 minutes we left them to it, but soon found another vocal bird, which offered a couple of good opportunities to see it perched up for some extended periods. Some satisfying first views of the islands main endemic species, despite the weather not being very favorable! Returning to the van around mid-morning, it was a good moment now to head to our next destination; the Cap de Ses Salines.

The drive down to the Cap (the most southerly point of Mallorca) took around 30 minutes, with a couple of **Red Kites** noted along the way. A prime location for watching birds in active migration, and with the sun now fully shining, we made our way straight to the Lighthouse to position ourselves for a vigil, to see what might pass on route to Africa. Soon after leaving the van, the first of good numbers of **European Bee-eaters** appeared overhead, 'prrt'ing as they circled low above us. From besides the lighthouse we saw a further group of 50, and other smaller groups as they circled and headed south. After a short wait, we soon saw our first raptor make its way fast overhead and south; a stunning dark chocolate **Honey Buzzard**! With the wind in its tail, it was through really fast, but the view was good. A promising start, but hereafter, aside from 4 Common Kestrels and a small number of **Barn Swallows**, very little else headed through. Interest was added whilst the skies were quiet by a small number of **Scopoli's Shearwaters** passing in front of Cabrera, allowing good but distant views. An **Audouin's Gull** sat on the shore was also obliging, while **Mediterranean Shag** was also noted. After around an hour we decided to head a bit further back up the road, to watch from another position. A brief stop nearby provided us with male **Common Redstart**. Moving further up the road, we stopped besides some almond groves for lunch.



Juvenile Honey Buzzard soaring over Cap Salines

From our lunch stop, we enjoyed some stunning views of our first good butterfly of the trip; a **TWO-TAILED PASHA** sunning itself in a fig tree. The field here also hosted 3 **Tawny Pipits**, while fields further along provided further migrants. Two juvenile **Woodchat Shrikes** were noted along with 3 **Northern Wheatears**, 4 **Tree Pipits**, 3 **Whinchats** and a couple of **Common Redstarts**; a good migrant haul considering we were several kilometers inland. A **Eurasian Hobby** and a small number of **Mediterranean Flycatchers** added further interest, as did a **Marsh Harrier**, many **Thekla Larks** and **Stonechats**.

Wrapping up here, we headed the short way up the road to near ourselves to the saltpans of the Salobrar De Campos. Before entering the pans, we first headed into the farmland areas nearby, where

driving the dirt tracks criss-crossing the area, we enjoyed some fantastic sightings. Scanning fields unsuccessfully for the off-chance of a passing Dotterel (the area does host these occasionally) we spotted several **Northern Wheatears** as well as Stonechats and **Hoopoe**, while a group of 6 Red Kites appeared interested in a presumed kill, with all taking off from a single spot. Joined in the air by a couple of Marsh Harriers, the raptor fest went up a notch when a juvenile ring-tail harrier came into view. The bird gave some phenomenal views over the next 40 minutes, showing itself to be a **MONTAGU'S HARRIER** (though the id took some work due to some apparent Pallid Harrier features appearing depending on the light conditions) and proved both an exciting and educational bird. Leaving the harrier to its hunting forays, we headed out around to the saltpans, noting some large flocks of Goldfinches a few Corn Buntings and a single **Bath White** and **Swallowtail** butterfly as we went, as well as **Zitting Cisticolas** flitting over the trackside fennel plants. Our first stop at the saltpans was along the Es Trenc road, where we stopped to see our first group of **Greater Flamingos** on the first pans. Alongside these were a small group of **Greenshank** and **Spotted Redshank** and good numbers of **Common Shelduck**, **Black-winged Stilts** and **Black-headed Gulls**. Further along, we stopped at another point to view some close pools which hosted a good number and variety of waders. **Kentish Plovers** numbered over 70 birds, while **Common Ringed Plovers** stood intermingled. Along the muddy spits fed and roosted several adult **Dunlin**, a nice number of **Little Stints** in both adult and juvenile garb, 5 **Curlew Sandpipers**, around 40 **Pied Avocets** and smaller numbers of **Black-winged Stilts** and, scarcer in Mallorca, a single **Red Knot** and 5 juvenile **Sanderlings**. Although the light was harsh, we were all able to work through these with telescopes at leisure. Once we had finished up scanning the flock, we loaded back into the bus and made our way round to the central track of the saltpans, where we walked between lagoons and picked up further good sightings. The fields leading to the pans held Stonechat, Goldfinch, **Zitting Cisticola** and several Swallows, while working through the wetlands we found a single adult **RUDDY SHELDUCK** (a Balearic Islands Rarity which occur annually in an apparently wild state, though the complication of feral birds muddies the waters somewhat). Further to this around 40 **Greenshank** was a nice count mixing with **Spotted Redshanks**, a couple of **Ruff** and the ubiquitous **Black-winged Stilts**. Good quantity of hirundines numbering in their hundreds consisted of good numbers of **Sand Martins**, many Barn Swallows and smaller numbers of House Martins. The muddier pools with less water held **Little Ringed Plovers** as well as their larger cousins the **Common Ringed Plover**, while further **Ruff** were noted, along with a couple of fine **Wood Sandpipers**. One group member got onto a trio of **TEMMINCK'S STINTS** which made landfall for the briefest of time beside the track. The rest of us were alerted to their 'trrt' trilling call as they flew past and headed to an unknown corner of the Salobrar. The more water filled lagoons held an impressive number of **Greater Flamingos**, numbering nearly 200 birds, while further birds were noted in flight; a spectacle against the low evening light, while ever growing numbers of hirundines and the piping calls of **Wood Sandpipers** added to the birdy ambience. A single female **Yellow Wagtail** showed really well along the track. A **Green Sandpiper** hung out with a couple of pallid **Greenshanks**, noted as we turned to walk out way back out of the saltpans and return to the bus. Our return was punctuated by the discovery of a smart **Balearic Green Toad**; a poorly toilet-trained individual which made its displeasure known on handling, amusing most of the group! From here we loaded into the bus and made the 30 minute drive back to Aumallia, finishing up a great first day.



Juvenile Montagu's Harrier at Sa Barrala

MONDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER - PARC NATURAL DE S'ALBUFERA AND MORTITX VALLEY

A day of mixed habitats today as we made our way north towards Alcudia for a visit to the famous s'Albufera marshes. Today was the first day that we began to take note of what looked like a distinctly iffy weather forecast for the rest of the week. Some mega storms were brewing in the surrounding Mediterranean, with heavy rain and strong winds all likely to feature and which would mean that we would have to plan ahead carefully to ensure our daily excursions yielded their specialist species as planned. One such adjustment, with today looking to be sunny, warm and calm, led us to choose to split today between the wetlands in the morning followed by a mountain visit in the afternoon, where soaring raptors would prove to be in their element.

After a 45 minute run, we arrived at the entrance to the Parc Natural de s'Albufera. We were soon working our way along the Grand Canal, noting singing **Cetti's Warbler**, calling **Kingfisher** and **Water Rail** and small numbers of Eurasian Coot and Mallard. The dense shrubbery lining the canal hosted a fine pair of **Black-crowned Night Herons** roosting in an exposed position. An adult and juvenile, they showed fantastically and allowed some nice photographs. A fine adult **WESTERN SWAMPHEN** was patrolling the tracks to Ses Puntetes as we passed; cracking views of this first of many sightings for our day here, while **Eurasian Reed Warbler** was also noted before we reached the heart of the park at Sa Roca. Here we paid visits to the various hides which overlook the Sa Roca pools, noting fine variety and number of wildfowl and waders. **Eurasian Teal** and **Northern Shoveler** were abundant, while **MARBLED DUCK** were dotted amongst their number; a highlight of any visit to this reserve. We also managed to dig out a cryptically plumaged juvenile **Garganey** amongst the many Teal. A group of **Glossy Ibis** were feeding in front of the hide and Grey Herons stood sentinel around the pools. Waders included a tight group of **Spotted Redshanks** which flew on the approach of a **Marsh Harrier**, calling 'chew-ik' as they went, while a single **Black-tailed Godwit** stood tall amongst them. Also present were a number of **Common Snipe**, **Dunlin**, **Little Stint** and calling **Greenshank**, as well as several **Kentish**

and **Little-ringed Plovers**. A number of huge blue-sheened **WESTERN SWAMPHENS** were present striding across the sedges, while a single **Northern Wheatear** nearby added non-aquatic interest.



Night Herons and Marbled Duck at s'Albufera

Dragging ourselves away from the entertainment of Sa Roca, we took a walk along the tracks lining various reed-lined canals, in search for another park specialist which can be difficult to find in September; the Moustached Warbler. Cetti's Warbler song abounded, while a bonus during our search was a fine pair of **RED-KNOBBED COOT** which swam towards us. An extremely rare bird in Europe, restricted only to Morocco and a couple of Spanish wetland sites, Mallorca has been home to concerted conservation efforts to preserve the species, and still hosts a small breeding population.

Whilst watching these, a few light 'tack' calls emanating from the reeds nearby indicated that a **MOUSTACHED WARBLER** was nearby! A game of cat and mouse ensued as we worked patiently to get even the briefest of views; not an easy feat! We managed several flights and a couple of nice but brief glimpses of at least two individuals as they crept low through the vegetation at the surface of the water, and most of the group had managed to see something of the bird, though it was by no means a classic performer, like we may be used to in the spring! An added bonus of spending so much time with these warblers was the spotting of a superb immature **LITTLE BITTERN** creeping around on floating reeds further up the canal, offering good scope views, while **Eurasian Reed Warbler** also showed well.



Red-knobbed Coot on the canals of s'Albufera

By now it was late morning, and so we made our way out of the park and back to the bus, before heading north past Pollenca, and into the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Sa Tramuntana Mountains. The winding mountain road leading out of Pollenca and into the mountains offered spectacular views, and some hair-raising moments as road biked flew past at 60mph! We soon arrived at the entrance to the Mortitx valley, where we packed some lunch and walked down towards the vineyards. The walk started well, with a couple of wonderful low-flying **GRIFFON VULTURES** cruising across the valley; the conditions were ideal! Walking through the Holm Oak forest was accompanied by the calls of **Blackcaps** and **Common Chaffinches**, while a family party of **Common Firecrests** proved extremely entertaining, offering fabulous views in low hanging branches for a good 10 minutes. Making our way past the vineyards we noted several **Mediterranean Flycatchers**, good numbers of **European Serin** with Goldfinches and Chaffinches, while a couple of ground-feeding **Tree Pipits** caught the attention with their 'spiz'ing calls. Following the vineyard we entered the ancient olive groves which lined the track which would eventually lead us to our lunch-stop viewpoint. The walk was punctuated by various fly-over **CINEREOUS VULTURES** crossing from ridge to ridge in their effortless style. Reaching our picnic spot, we took positions in the shade of olive trees to have lunch and scan the stunning views around us for further raptors. Both **Griffon** and **Cinereous Vultures** featured

frequently, as did **Peregrine Falcon** and **Common Kestrel**. The endemic subspecies of **Blue Tit** played hard ball for views here despite frequent calling, and some of the group managed to see a couple of birds, while a **Blue Rock Thrush** was noted at biblical distance along one ridge. Barn Swallows were moving through the valley on migration, while a couple of **Eurasian Crag Martins** were also picked up as we scanned. A group of around 30 Ravens floated around a distant mountaintop, presumably attracted to food there. This site can yield Bonelli's Eagle with a bit of luck, as it overlooks an active territory, but after about an hour and a half there was unfortunately no show. Satisfied with what we had seen (and of course the fabulous views!) we headed back down the valley, noting our first **ELEONORA'S FALCON** of the trip (though somewhat distant and brief unfortunately, for such a spectacular species), and also our first **Booted Eagle** of the tour. Back towards the vineyards we picked up a single **Pied Flycatcher** and a couple of **Willow Warblers** along with the previously noted Tree Pipits and Serins, while overhead we spotted an adult **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** circling over the ridge; a fairly scarce winter visitor to the island. Soon we were back at the bus and, after some refreshing locally grown watermelon kept cool in the cool box, we headed down out of the mountains and back towards Pollenca, and then onwards back to the hotel. On route we made a brief stop in between now frequent rain showers in farmland surrounding Maria de la Salud; a site worth checking for Lesser Kestrel, though on this occasion none could be located. Many Common Kestrels and numerous **Corn Buntings** were enjoyed here, before we finished the journey and headed back to the Aumallia Hotel.



Cinereous Vultures soaring over the Mortitx valley

With a bit of time to spare before dinner, we took a walk around the surrounding countryside of the hotel. Several highlights were had here, including up to 15 **Stone Curlews** roosting amongst the grape vines, a flock of 10 **European Bee-eaters** which gave close fly pasts and even perched up nearby on various occasions, offering great photographic opportunities. An obliging male **Cirl Bunting** perched up beside a **Thekla Lark** on a rock pile capped things off nicely, before the group retired to the hotel for the night.

TUESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER - VILAFRANCA, CASTELL DE SANTUARI AND PORTOCOLOM

A day of storm-dodging! The original plan was to visit the island of Sa Dragonera today, but with storms hitting the north of the island, the boat was cancelled (and the trip rescheduled for later in the week). With such dire conditions forecast for the whole of the north of the island, we opted for another day down south, and what luck that we did. Rainfall of over 100L fell across the s'Albufera wetlands and the mountains today, causing substantial flooding in some areas. Not somewhere we wanted to be today! Instead of getting a soaking, we managed to stay dry by remaining in the south of the island and birding some of the areas further hotspots. We started with a walk around the hotel again, which provided us with our first really good views of **Hoopoe** this trip as it bounded between almond trees, while **Sardinian Warblers**, **Stonechats**, **Thekla Larks** and **Mediterranean Flycatchers** provided further interest amongst the other usual suspects.

Spying a window in the weather on this predominantly grey day, we made a dash to the central plains of the island, to the extensive farmland area of the Pla de Lanzell near Vilafranca, in search of farmland species. Working through the area, we noted good numbers of vocal **Corn Buntings** in the weedy corners and several **Zitting Cisticolas**. Kestrels were abundant, while a **Peregrine Falcon** flew through and landed in nearby fields, allowing nice scope views of this smart juvenile. The resident Balearic Island are of the **Brookei** subspecies, and we were able to note the more extensive black moustache on this bird. Red Kites were all over the area also. Another highlight came with the discovery of a small flock of **Short-toed Larks** which, eventually numbering over 30 individuals, gave nice views on the deck as they fed along the gravel track edges and in short stubble, often alongside their larger **Thekla Lark** cousins. Rain was threatening now, with black skies on all horizons, so we made our move, heading through Felanitx and onto the Castell de Santuari.

The weather held off nicely as we climbed up the mountain road to the castle, through dense pine forest and up to the carpark below the castle. An ideal lunch stop, we unpacked and enjoyed the views of the coastline from here as we tucked in. It wasn't just a lunch stop though, as the birding proved good as well! **Crag Martins** were performing really well on arrival, flying in front of the castle walls at close range, offering unrivaled views. A pair of **Blue Rock Thrushes** included a singing male which offered scope views for much of our time here. Swallows and House Martins were migrating through below the low grey clouds, and were suddenly joined by a cracking quartet of **ALPINE SWIFTS**! These aerial acers breed here at the Castell de Santuari, but it's pretty late in the year, so these could well have just been migrants. They put on a nice circling show before bombing off around the crag and out of view. A final highlight was spotting the local pair of adult **brookei Peregrine Falcons** perched below the castle, offering great scope views before making a fly-past. A single **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** gave a fly-by, while Blackcaps, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tits, Chaffinches and a couple of **Mediterranean Flycatchers** made up most of the other avifauna of the area.



Alpine Swift and Blue Rock Thrush at the Castell de Santuari

Leaving here, and giving the showers which had passed the coast here, we thought we would give Portocolom another look, checking some areas not previously visited for migrants. We started with a scan of some open weedy fields just of the bay of s'Algar, which yielded a nice smattering of migrants including **Whinchat**, a single **Pied Flycatcher**, two **Common Redstarts** and a single **Willow Warbler**. A couple of **Hoopoes** were also present, while further up the track was a juvenile **Woodchat Shrike** perched high in bushes; a nice little haul! We then took a short stroll around the picturesque bay of s'Algar before heading into the town for a coffee overlooking the beautiful harbour of Portocolom. Heading out we stopped briefly to admire a couple of roosting **Audouin's Gulls** on the harbour wall,

before heading round to the pines and fig grove opposite s'Arenalet. Things initially looked quiet here, though we did hear a couple of unobliging **Balearic Warblers** calling in the garrigue here (they really don't like showing themselves in this cool grey weather!) and also several flight views of an elusive **Wryneck**, which was a new bird for several in the group. Leaving here, we headed up to a viewpoint overlooking the sea and coast, where we set ourselves up for a short seawatch, which yielded around 10 **Scopoli's Shearwaters** cruising past, some at a reasonably close range, along with a couple of **Shags** and a steady passage of Yellow-legged Gulls. Unfortunately with the bad weather, the local fishing boat hadn't been out today, and therefore didn't come into harbour with its usual trail of shearwaters and gulls, but it was good to see the small number we did all the same. Once we had satisfied our sea watching urges, we made our way back to Son Provenç and the hotel. A highlight of the short journey back was a brief stop besides a field dotted with Carob trees. A group of Red-legged Partridges caught the eye with their movement, and while watching these we located our first **Turtle Doves** of the week, with up to 6 together in these trees followed by a further 6 flying past in the neighboring trees. No mean feat to see 12 **Turtle Doves** together in the UK these days, so the sighting was well appreciated by the whole group.



One of 12 Turtle Doves seen on our way home today

WEDNESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER - S'ALBUFERA, CAP FORMENTOR AND S'ALBUFERETA.

After what seemed like the passing of the worst rainstorms in the north of the island, it was the turn of the south to get a soaking! The group left the hotel to torrential rain today, getting a soaking during the 15 meter walk to the van! The forecast for the north of the island was decent, so it was good to be leaving this rain behind! In 45 minutes we had arrived at the boundaries of the s'Albufera marshes, where we would first visit the sewage works known as the Depuradora de Muro. Driving in we flushed

three **Hoopoes** from the track, while beside the viewing tower the effects of yesterday's torrential rains were evident. The normally dry fields were flooded, and alive with waders! A great variety including numerous **Greenshank**, **Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers**, several **Ruff**, **Dunlin** and **Little Stints**, **Common Snipe**, 10 **Green Sandpipers**, 15 **Wood Sandpipers** and our first **Northern Lapwing** of the autumn. A real wader fest! Interspersed were a couple of **Yellow Wagtails** of the *flava* subspecies. Our first **Common Starlings** of the autumn were also seen, with some 100 wheeling around, while a **couple of** Whinchat dotted the fence lines. On the sewage works viewed from the tower were **Marbled Duck**, 3 **Gadwall**, several **Little Grebes** and good numbers of **Shoveler** and **Teal**. The fringes held more **Yellow Wagtails** as well as **Common** and **Green Sandpipers**. The highlight here was the wheeling flocks of **Sand Martins**, numbering several hundred birds, interspersed with plenty of **Barn Swallows** and, best of all, a single **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** which we watched weave its way up and down a hidden channel for about 20 minutes; a cracker! Marsh Harriers were patrolling the extensive reedbeds here, while a couple of Reed Warbler were vocal behind us. Finishing up here, we made our way up the road to the tower overlooking the lagoons at s'Amarador. Several **Yellow Wagtails** were on the nearby fields, and pair of **Whinchats** were near where we parked up. It was quiet from the tower, though a **Mute Swan**; while nothing unusual in the UK, was a good bird for the Balearics! **Kingfisher** was noted along with small numbers of Common Coot and Mallards, but little else.

Planning for the week ahead, a phone call with the boat operator at Dragonera made it clear that boats were cancelled today as well as yesterday, and nothing was certain for tomorrow. With the visit to the island up in the air, it was clear that an Eleonora's Falcon fix should be on the cards. With that, we decided to make an unscheduled visit to the spectacular Formentor Peninsular. The winding road up the peninsular is a scenic highlight in Mallorca, and with breeding Eleonora's along the tip, it's a great site. Heading off up the peninsular, we were met by breathtaking view after breathtaking. On nearing the tip, we parked up in a small layby overlooking high cliffs and sea, and were immediately met with fantastic views of an **ELEONORA'S FALCON** as it swept past. This was followed by several more over the course of the next 30 minutes, including some nice close fly-bys and two superb vocal birds which shot passed and stooped at break-neck speed towards the sea, no doubt in pursuit of an incoming migrant passerines; their main prey during their late September chick rearing period. Singing **Blue Rock Thrush** was also noted here before we continued up the road towards the Formentor Lighthouse. About 5 minutes from the light was where things ground to a halt, as we met the tail end of a long queue of cars; mid-day visits to the cap aren't recommended, even mid-week at the end of September apparently! We sat it out for around 30 minutes before pulling a U'ie and turning around; it was evident that even if we did make the lighthouse we would never find parking! Sitting in the queue wasn't as tedious as it could have been, with several **Eleonora's Falcons** on constant show close beside the van, bombing about in front of stunning views of the bay of Pollenca!



Eleonora's Falcon at Formentor

Heading back to Puerto Pollenca, we had lunch at the Can Cuarassa track, followed by a short walk along to the end. It was quiet here, with small numbers of Linnets feeding on thistle heads and a couple of **Zitting Cisticolas** whipping around. We then headed on to the main entrance to the s'Albufereta wetlands, passing several **Audouin's Gulls** along the impressive shoreside of Pollenca Bay. Before reaching the viewing tower overlooking s'Albufereta, we spent some time birding the small pine forest known locally as the 'bosquet de 'sAlbuferta'. Often a migrant magnet, we managed to dig out around 5 **Common Redstarts**, a **Pied Flycatcher** and a **Willow Warbler**, along with a couple of **Mediterranean Flycatchers** and some vocal **Firecrests**. Up towards the tower, and an **Osprey** was a highlight as it cruised across the extensive wetland ahead of us. A single **Stone Curlew** also gave a nice fly-past, and a couple of Marsh Harriers were also seen. An impressive flock of egrets included about 30 Little and 5 **Great White Egrets**, along with several Grey Herons, but for other stuff it was rather quiet, with surprisingly very little in the way of wildfowl present. Returning back we spent a little more time with the **Redstarts** and **Firecrests**, before heading up the road for a well-earned coffee!

Our coffee stop just happened to position us nicely alongside our final birding stop of the afternoon; Maristany marsh. We walked the track which runs between the large areas of open water on both sides, scanning as we went. Cetti's Warblers were vocal in the nearby reeds, while further out across the lagoons were **Western Swamphen** striding through the reed edges. A single **Marbled Duck** was noted on the water, along with good numbers of Coots and Little Grebes. On some of the exposed rocks we noted **Little Stint**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Common Sandpiper** and **Greenshank**, along with a **Yellow Wagtail**. The highlight for most of the group here was, amongst the large numbers of Barn Swallows and **Sand Martins** hawking insects, a single **Pallid Swift** which spent around 10 minutes repeatedly drinking from the water's surface, taking water in flight at really close range. The light on the bird was ideal, and we were really able to appreciate the sandy hues to the plumage on the bird; a real cracker! And a fine way to finish our days birding, we set off back south, getting back to Aumallia in good time for everyone to chill before another superb dinner.

23RD SEPTEMBER 2021 – SA DRAGONERA

After poor weather put paid to our planned visit to the island of Sa Dragonera earlier in the week, we had been keeping an eye on the forecast hoping that our rescheduled visit would not be cancelled. Today was the day, and it proved to be a good one to head out to the island. It's a fair run up to St Elm from Felanitx, so the group took a slightly earlier breakfast and we headed off with plenty of time. Reaching the small town of St Elm in the far west of Mallorca, we had our first view of the mighty Dragonera Island across the short stretch of blue flat sea which separates it from the main island. The smaller island of Es Pantaleu was opposite us, and as we sat in the harbour waiting for the boat, we watched the occasional **Audouins Gull** as it passed by. Before long the Margarita (the name of the boat) arrived and we were soon onboard. As we reached Dragonera we saw an **Osprey** feeding just off the island, while a Little Egret was present in the harbour mouth, along with a Grey Heron. Being an island, waterbirds aside from seabirds are generally scarce, and usually only pausing on migration, with these two species making the migration to Africa at this time of year.

Disembarking, we walked up onto the island, greeted by the park staff, before setting off on a loop of the main cultivated and terraced areas of the island, before heading for the most eastern lighthouse; the Far (meaning lighthouse in Catalan) de Tramuntana. Migration is usually the main attraction on Sa Dragonera, and we enjoyed some nice sightings of migratory species. An early hint of raptor migration came in the form of 2 **Honey Buzzards** which flew south, having used the thermals created by the highest point of the island; Na Popi. A good number of **Booted Eagles** were seen throughout our visit, many being resident but possibly including some migrants, while Kestrel and **Peregrine** were also seen. The off Barn Swallow and House Martin were also noted as they passed on migration, while migratory species noted in the scrubby garrigue across the island included a nice scattering of **Willow Warblers**, **Redstarts**, **Yellow Wagtails** overhead, and **Pied Flycatchers**; all Africa bound. The highlight of the migrant passerines was certainly a fine male **MOLTONI'S WARBLER** which we picked up on our way to the Far de Tramuntana. The bird offered some really nice and prolonged views low in a stunted pine tree, permitting great views for all. A real Balearic Island specialty, and usually a preserve of spring visits, this was a real bonus! Aside from the migratory species, the breeding birds offer great reward for a visit to the island. Top of the list were the **ELEONORA'S FALCONS**. These supreme flying machines gave some fantastic views as we rounded on the Far de Tramuntana, swooping and calling during aerial acrobatics, over their unseen nesting site on the sheer cliffs. The birds were on offer for the whole walk, and we spent much time enjoying their antics. Probably one of the most elegant raptors in the world. Additionally, we noted at least 3 **BALEARIC WARBLERS** on our walk. Mostly vocal, they were typically elusive, but good views were had of at least one after some persistence and waiting. Further interest was provided by the regular sightings of **BLUE ROCK THRUSHES** which make the coastlines of the island their home, and also the many **Mediterranean Flycatchers** which could be seen throughout the island.



Male Moltoni's Warbler on Dragonera

After a steady amble back to the harbour in very pleasant sunny conditions, having had lunch at the lighthouse, we waited for our boat to arrive, before boarding and heading back to St Elm. In no time we were enjoying a coffee or cold drink in the local bars overlooking the harbour, before making our return to Felanitx. Birding wasn't on the agenda, as this late afternoon was reserved for getting the group their pre return travel Covid test. The small clinic had everyone sorted (fortunately with everyone testing negative!) in no time, and we were back to Aumallia with a bit of chill time before dinner.

24TH SEPTEMBER 2021 – CABRERA

Today had us checking out of the wonderful Aumallia hotel, having spent a fantastic few days in comfort, with fantastic food and hospitality. Saying thanks to Cati and the team, we headed out with our overnight bags loaded in the van (leaving suitcases with Cati to collect tomorrow), Ready for our Cabrera overnight stay! The Cabrera island visit is something a bit special, and while it sees us leaving the comfort of the hotel, a night in sleeping bags and a more basic accommodation is well worth it for the chance to have the island virtually to ourselves! We headed to Colonia de Sant Jordi, picking up our boat tickets as we arrived, and headed down to the quayside. A somewhat unexpected sighting for the group here was a group of around 150 **Greater Flamingos** flying over the town! Presumably commuting between the Salobrar de Campos salt pans and the private lagoons of Sa Vall nearby. Before long we were loading up onto our boat and heading out south of Cap Salines, leaving the shelter of the Mallorcan coastline behind. As mentioned previously, we have been experiencing some pretty

windy weather lately, and while the sea was fine for crossing to Cabrera today, it was by no means flat! However a long swell meant it wasn't bumpy, and our skipper ensured that our crossing was as smooth as possible. Aside from **Audouin's Gulls** and **Shags** noted as we left harbour, the crossing was quiet up until we arrived close to the archipelago of Cabrera. Here we started picking up **Scopoli's Shearwaters**, numbering around 30 individuals in total. Even more pleasing were a handful of fairly close **Balearic Shearwaters** which passed the boat; our first of this trip. A ore distant flock numbered some 30 individuals; these being some of the first of the year to return to the islands after a summer spent in the Atlantic. Other sightings included a single **Marsh Harrier** arriving from the north low over the sea, and a handful of passing Swallows. Arriving at Cabrera Gran, we entered the natural harbour, overshadowed by Cabrera Castle, and landed in the main harbour, where we unloaded our bags, chatted with the island staff, and then made our way across the island to our hostel. Leaving bags here, we set off to do some birding!



Scopoli's Shearwater at sea off Cabrera

During the course of the rest of the day, we walked around the main migrant hotspots, including the beach and open habitats around the picnic area, the garrigue which leads up to the island museum, and the terraces above the museum. The most notable feature here is how generally easy it is to see migrant birds and, in some cases, how abundant they are! Over the course of the day we estimated that we saw around 30 **Willow Warblers** and 60 **Common Redstarts**, while 8 **Northern Wheatears**, 5 **Yellow Wagtails** (both *flava* and *iberiae*), 2 **Tree Pipits**, a **Woodchat Shrike**, 3 **Reed Warblers**, 3 **Common Whitethroats**, 4 **Garden Warblers**, a single **Chiffchaff** (our first of the autumn), 3 **Pied Flycatchers** and a **Whinchat** made up the other grounded migrants here; another level to what the Mallorcan mainland had produced this week! Numerous **House Martins** and **Swallows** were noted passing, while 3 **Sparrowhawks** were around looking for an easy meal. Added interest was provided by the presence of good numbers of **Balearic Warblers**, some of which showed themselves nicely, **Blue Rock Thrush** and several fly-over **Eleonora's Falcons** and **Booted Eagles**; all island breeders. All in all a very birdy day! As the light faded, we walked down to Sa Cantina (the island bar) for beers and delicious tapas, before walking back to our digs along where we headed to bed.



Juvenile Woodchat Shrike on Cabrera

25TH SEPTEMBER 2021 - CABRERA

Today we woke up with Cabrera all to ourselves, with no tourists in sight until it was time for us to leave later in the morning; bliss! We woke up, made ourselves a quick coffee and headed for a short walk around to see what new migrants may have arrived overnight. A Grey Heron had come in overnight, and we heard a **Kingfisher**, quite unusual for the island. Before breakfast, with things still yet to warm up, many of the migrants were still hidden deep within the pistachia scrub, though we could here that there were considerably more birds around than yesterday. During our walk we estimated some **60 Willow Warblers** calling from cover, and at least **20 Reed Warblers**; an exceptional number! It was hard to estimate the number of **Common Redstarts** present, but at least 100 were heard and seen. After a spot of breakfast we continued visiting all the main areas close to our hostel, taking advantage of the photo opportunities on offer from the many trans-Saharan migrants present. Several **Garden Warblers** remained, drinking from a puddle under fig trees, while **Common Nightingale** was heard but not seen. **Wheatears** and **Yellow Wagtails** seemed to have cleared out, with only 2 of the former and 1 of the latter present, while small numbers of **Pied Flycatchers** were still present. Once we were all ready, we walked back to the main harbour, enjoying excellent views of **Balearic Warbler** along the way, before boarding our return boat back to Mallorca.



One of many Common Redstarts on Cabrera

The journey across gave us more views of both **Balearic** and **Scopoli's Shearwaters**, while a close pass under the cliffs of the Illa des Conills (isle of rabbits) gave us a nice look at the **Eleonora's Falcons** flying passed their nest sites. Before long we were back in Colonya de Sant Jordi, and after collecting our van, we headed back to Hotel Aumallia, where Cati had arranged us an al fresco lunch. The groups flight was mid-afternoon, so we all had a little time to chill, reorganize suit cases and eat before heading to the airport in Palma. The sun was shining and **Two-tailed Pasha**, **Cleopatra** and **Geranium Bronze** butterflies were noted in the hotel gardens. Once we were all ready, we headed for Palma, arriving in good time at the airport, where we said our farewells.

ORIOLE BIRDING

MALLORCA AND CABRERA AUTUMN MIGRATION

18TH - 25TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Species order, names and taxonomy follows - Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1). <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>

#	Common Name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Comments
Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)										
1	Common Shelduck		x							
2	Garganey			1						
3	Northern Shoveler			x		x				
4	Gadwall					3				
5	Mallard		x	x		x				
6	Eurasian Teal			x		x				
7	Marbled Duck			x		1				
Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)										
8	Red-legged Partridge				x	x				
Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)										
9	Greater Flamingo		x					150		
Podicipedidae (Grebes)										
10	Little Grebe					x				
Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)										
11	Rock Dove	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
12	Common Woodpigeon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
13	European Turtle Dove				12					
14	Collared Dove	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Apodidae (Swifts)										
15	Alpine Swift				4					

#	Common Name		18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Comments
16	Pallid Swift						1				
	<i>Rallidae and Gruidae (Rails, Coots and Cranes)</i>										
17	Water Rail				H						
18	Common Moorhen				x		x				
19	Eurasian Coot				x		x				
20	Red-knobbed Coot				2						
21	Western Swamphen				x						
	<i>Burhinidae (Thick-knees)</i>										
22	Stone-curlew			H	15	H	1	H			
	<i>Recurvirostridae and Charadriidae (Stilts, Avocets, Plovers and allies)</i>										
23	Black-winged Stilt			x	x		x				
24	Pied Avocet			x							
25	Northern Lapwing						3				
26	Kentish Plover			x	x		x				
27	Common Ringed Plover			x	x		x				
28	Little Ringed Plover			x	x		x				
	<i>Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)</i>										
29	Black-tailed Godwit				1						
30	Red Knot			1							
31	Ruff			x	x		x				
32	Curlew Sandpiper			5							
33	Temminck's Stint			3							
34	Sanderling			5							
35	Dunlin			x	x		x				
36	Little Stint			x	x		x				
37	Common Snipe				x		x				
38	Common Sandpiper			x	x		x				
39	Green Sandpiper			1			10				

#	Common Name		18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		Comments
40	Spotted Redshank			x	x							
41	Common Greenshank			x	x		x					
42	Wood Sandpiper						15					
	<i>Laridae (Skuas, Gulls and Terns)</i>											
43	Black-headed Gull			x	x		x					
44	Audouin's Gull			x			x	x	x	x		
45	Yellow-legged Gull			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
	<i>Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)</i>											
46	Cory's Shearwater				8		10			x	x	
47	Balearic Shearwater								x	x		
	<i>Phalacrocoracidae and Sulidae (Cormorants, Shags and Gannets)</i>											
48	European Shag			x		x		x	x	x		
	<i>Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)</i>											
49	Little Bittern					1						
50	Grey Heron			x	x		x	1		1		
51	Great White Egret						5					
52	Little Egret			x	x		x	x				
53	Cattle Egret		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
54	Black-crowned Night-Heron				2							
	<i>Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)</i>											
55	Glossy Ibis				x							
	<i>Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)</i>											
56	Osprey						2	1				
57	European Honey-buzzard			1				2				
58	Cinereous Vulture				x							
59	Griffon Vulture				x							
60	Booted Eagle				x	x	x	x	x	x		
61	Western Marsh Harrier			x	x		x		x			

#	Common Name		18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		Comments
62	Montagu's Harrier			1								
63	Eurasian Sparrowhawk				1	1			2			
64	Red Kite		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Tytonidae and Strigidae (Owls)</i>												
65	Eurasian Scops Owl		H	H	H			H				
<i>Upupidae (Hoopoes)</i>												
66	Eurasian Hoopoe			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Alcedinidae, Meropidae and Coraciidae (Kingfishers, Bee-eaters and Rollers)</i>												
67	Common Kingfisher				1				H	H		
68	European Bee-eater		x	x	12							
<i>Picidae (Woodpeckers)</i>												
69	Eurasian Wryneck		H	1		1						
<i>Falconidae (Falcons)</i>												
70	Common Kestrel		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
71	Eleonora's Falcon				1			x	x			
72	Eurasian Hobby			1								
73	Peregrine Falcon			1	1	2	1	1	2			
<i>Oriolidae and Laniidae (Orioles and Shrikes)</i>												
74	Eurasian Golden Oriole											
75	Woodchat Shrike		3			1			1			
<i>Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)</i>												
76	Common Raven		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Paridae (Tits)</i>												
77	Eurasian Blue Tit				2							Endemic ssp <i>balearicus</i>
78	Great Tit		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Balearic island endemic ssp <i>mallorcae</i>
<i>Hirundinidae (Swallows)</i>												
79	Sand Martin			x	x	x	x					
80	Eurasian Crag Martin				x	12						

#	Common Name		18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		Comments
81	Barn Swallow		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
82	Red-rumped Swallow						1					
83	Common House Martin		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Alaudidae (Larks)</i>												
84	Greater Short-toed Lark					30						
85	Thekla's Lark		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)</i>												
86	Zitting Cisticola			x	x	x	x					
87	Moustached Warbler				3							
88	Eurasian Reed Warbler				x				3	20		
89	Eurasian Blackcap			x	x	h			x			
90	Garden Warbler								4	x		
91	Moltoni's Warbler							1				
92	Sardinian Warbler		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
93	Common Whitethroat								3			
94	Balearic Warbler			4		2		3	x	x		
<i>Scotocercidae and Phylloscopidae (Bush and Leaf Warblers)</i>												
95	Cetti's Warbler		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
96	Willow Warbler			1		1	1	x	30	60		
97	Common Chiffchaff								1			
<i>Regulidae and Troglodytidae (Kinglets and Wrens)</i>												
98	Common Firecrest			x	x	x	x	x				
<i>Turdidae and Sturnidae (Thrushes and Starlings)</i>												
99	Common Starling						x		x	x		
100	Eurasian Blackbird		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
<i>Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)</i>												
101	Mediterranean Flycatcher		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Endemic ssp <i>balearica</i>
102	Common Nightingale			1						h		

#	Common Name	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Comments
103	European Pied Flycatcher				1	1	x	x	x	
104	Common Redstart		3		2	5	x	60	x	
105	Blue Rock Thrush			1	2	1	3	1	1	
106	Whinchat	1	2	1				1		
107	European Stonechat	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
108	Northern Wheatear		3					8	2	
	<i>Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)</i>									
109	House Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	<i>Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)</i>									
110	Western Yellow Wagtail		2			x	3	5	1	M.f.flava and M.f.iberiae seen
111	Tawny Pipit	1	3							
112	Tree Pipit		4		3			2	2	
	<i>Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)</i>									
113	Common Chaffinch	x	x	x	x	x	x			
114	European Greenfinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
115	Common Linnet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
116	Common Crossbill		x	x						Endemic ssp <i>balearica</i>
117	European Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
118	European Serin	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	<i>Emberizidae (Old World Buntings)</i>									
119	Corn Bunting	x	x	x	x	x	x			
120	Cirl Bunting	x	x	x	x	x	x			
	Additional species	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Comments
121	Ruddy Shelduck		1							
122	Mute Swan					1				

[illegible]