

Catalunya, Andorra, and Mallorca – May 2015

At the end of May, I visited Spain and Andorra for what started out as a sightseeing trip, but ended up being a mostly birding trip. My original intent was to visit Barcelona for the first time and also to go to Andorra, mainly for the sake of adding another country to my list of places visited. But as I planned the trip, and researched the available birds of Spain, I found that I included more time for birding and less time for sightseeing.

I had about 25 target species on this trip although several of them were passage migrants and would require a lot of luck to find. All together I had 18 new species (with some possible future splits) and raised my European list to over 300 species. The total trip list of seen species was 135 with a few more “heard-only” which is pretty good for about 6 days of end-of-migration target birding. But because of the limited amount of time, there were also some key misses.

I’d certainly recommend Spain as a birding location, especially given the weak state of the Euro against the Dollar and the Pound at the moment. It’s relatively easy to get around. Quite a few people in the tourist and hospitality industries speak English. Also, I speak passable Spanish which made getting around as a solo traveler easier, despite the lisping Castilian accent making it a challenge. Knowing Spanish and a little bit of French also made understanding written Catalan easier, although the spoken language was tough – it sounds more like Portuguese. And there is definitely plenty of information on where to bird and what you can expect.

This report uses a convention I’ve seen in other reports. I’ll highlight the first sighting of a species or notable repeat sightings in bold. I’ll also note lifers for me with an asterisk.

Enjoy!

Jeff Hopkins
Whitehall, PA USA

Logistics

Several months prior to my trip I contacted Stephen Christopher of Catalan Bird Tours to organize some guided trips in Catalunya. I knew I definitely wanted to visit the steppes near Lleida and also the Garraf Massif outside Barcelona. Since Stephen lives south of Barcelona, he recommended I base myself in Sitges to avoid him having to fight Barcelona traffic each day. In addition, because of my desire to go to Andorra, I suggested that we visit Lleida on the last day of the tour so that he could drop me off in Lleida and I could catch a bus to Andorra on the same day (saving me an extra night in Barcelona or Sitges).

I had birded in Europe before and also in Central Asia, so I was able to provide Stephen with a fairly short list of target species based on his webpage and the various checklists online. Stephen eliminated a few improbable targets and then proposed the following itinerary:

- One day north of Barcelona at Cap de Creus and Aiguamolls de l’Emporda
- One day at the Garraf Massif and Llobregat Marshes
- One day at steppes near Lleida

Because Llobregat is closed on Mondays, Stephen put the Cap de Creus session on Monday, even though that made for some longer travel on that first day.

After sending my deposit to Stephen, I learned that some friends of mine from here in PA, Jennifer and Fritz Brock, were also planning on being in Spain at the same time as I was. I put them in touch with Stephen, who adjusted his fee for me based on a group of three. We all planned to meet up for three days of birding, after which Jennifer and Fritz would spend an extra day with Stephen.

I debated between Extremadura and Mallorca for the rest of the trip, but after spending time on BirdForum, I realized that Mallorca was a great place for birding, easy to get to and around, and could also provide a couple endemics as well as act as a back-up for several species in case I missed them in Catalunya. So when all was said and done, I included three days birding around Catalunya and another three days on Mallorca in addition to the initial goal of Barca and Andorra.

The time other than the three days with Stephen was self-organized. I purchased a copy of Dave Gosney's "Finding Birds in Mallorca" which was very helpful, although some things had already changed since the latest revision in 2012. I also got plenty of help in finding birding sites for particular targets in Mallorca from the patrons of BirdForum, especially Mike Montier (Thanks, Mike!).

For Andorra, there is really very little information and few trip reports available. Andorra is primarily a winter skiing destination, and what little tourist information about the offseason is more about general hiking and cycling. Fortunately I found an extremely thorough report online called "Els Ocells de Andorra/The Birds of Andorra." This was a report in both English and Catalan documenting the results of a recent breeding bird survey throughout the Principality. This gave me an idea of some places where I might go for some targets.

I booked all of my lodging online mostly through Expedia or Booking.com, although I booked the hotel in Andorra directly with the hotel.

Barcelona: Hotel Lloret Ramblas - 62€/night. Not fancy, but perfectly acceptable. I picked it for its proximity to the tourist action and public transport, not for its luxury.

Sitges: Hotel Galeon - 60€/night. On the pedestrian zone and near the railway station. It was recommended by Stephen for easy access to his home and the birding sites. I actually ended up in their "annex" which is known as the Hotel Galeon Pavilion.

Andorra: Hotel Exe Princep - 33€/night. Mainly a business-persons' hotel. With only buses for public transport in Andorra and much of the smaller towns closed for the off-season, I needed to be centrally located. This hotel is actually connected to a decent Japanese/Thai restaurant where I ate one evening.

Mallorca: Hotel Pollentia (Port de Pollenca) - 44€/night. Very popular with the English pensioner package-tourist set. Reasonably cheap and near the birding sites, but not in the depths of the tourist masses of Alcudia.

All hotels had air-con, satellite TV, and English speaking staff. The Galeon had a pool, but none of the others did.

I rented a car in Mallorca. I ordered it online through Dollar, but received a notice just prior to my trip that I should pick the car up at Palma Airport from Hertz. The actual advertised rate was 33€/day with unlimited km for the smallest car possible with an automatic transmission. It also turned out to have a GPS system, but once I learned my way around a bit, I turned that off. Unfortunately, added to the

base rental charge was 40€ of concession fees and 29€ of VAT, coming to a grand total of 168€ for 3 days rental. Still, I could not imagine doing Mallorca in such a short time without having a car.

And now the day-by-day details...

May 16-17 – Barcelona

I arrived in Barcelona at about 1 PM, and took the AeroBus to Placa Catalunya (5.90€), where the first bird I saw in Barcelona was **feral rock pigeon** by the thousands. They're easily the most common bird in the city. There were also **common swifts** flying overhead. But these were intended to be sightseeing days, so I didn't even bring the bins with me as I explored the city the first afternoon. I added **serin**, **house sparrow**, **collared dove**, and **monk parakeet** to the trip list in the park across from Sagrada Familia, and **yellow-legged gulls** at the harbor.

The second day I did bring the bins with me, since I intended to go to Parc Guell and Montjuic. But the number of new species, as expected, was somewhat limited. This day added only **Eurasian magpie** (in Parc Guell), **European starling**, and **blackbird**. I also heard a **great tit** in Parc Guell.

One other tip: if you're going to be in Barcelona, do not stay in a hotel on the Ramblas on the night that FC Barcelona wins La Liga. The celebration was literally right below my hotel room balcony. While it was fun to watch initially, it went on well into the wee hours of the morning and I had an early train to catch.

May 18 – Cap de Creus and Aiguamolls de l'Emporda

Stephen's original suggestion was for me to travel to Barcelona Airport for him to meet me after he picked up Jennifer and Fritz in Sitges. That way he didn't need to come into the city and deal with city traffic. To me that didn't make a lot of sense, since it meant heading south in order to turn around and head north. So I did a little research and found that I could take a commuter rail train to Figueres and be there at 7:45, just as Stephen would be reaching there with Jennifer and Fritz. He actually liked that idea better.

I started out early, taking the Metro to Passeig de Gracia Station where I caught the 6 AM Rodalies R11 train to Figueres. It cost 16€, which I paid to the conductor on the train (for some reason, the ticket machines were not operating at 5:30 in the morning). The train pulled into Figueres at 8:15, about a half hour late – no explanation given. Fritz was waiting for me on the platform and after a quick stop in the station snack-bar, we headed to Stephen's SUV where he and Jennifer were waiting.

First stop was a field just outside Figueres on the way to Cap de Creus. There'd been a large influx of **red-footed falcons** into Spain this spring, and this field was a good place to find them. In fact, we had about ten of them, mostly males, but a few females and an immature, too. We also turned up a **melodious warbler***, my first lifer of the trip. **House martins** flew over the field and Stephen picked out a **bank swallow**. We also found a few **Eurasian tree sparrows**, a **lesser kestrel**, the first of many **zitting cisticolas** and **woodpigeons**, a **Sardinian warbler**, a **crested lark**, a **black kite**, and some distant **rollers**.

Next stop was a patch of cork-oak woodland. We heard quite a few **nightingales** and **corn buntings**, saw another melodious warbler, a **great tit**, a **spotted flycatcher**, and then our target, **western orphee warbler***. On our return to the car, we heard a **wryneck** but couldn't find it to see it, then we spent

some time getting Jennifer on her lifer nightingale. Once back at the car, Jennifer pointed out a distant white blob in a tree on the horizon that turned out to be a **short-toed eagle**.

Then it was off to the lighthouse at Cap de Creus. We walked as close as we could get to the cliff-side and eventually Stephen picked out a **Balearic shearwater*** in flight from among the yellow-legged gulls. I got on it, but by the time I passed the scope to the others it was gone. Stephen eventually found a second more distant bird sitting on the water, which even in the scope was hard for me to see, especially since there was a pod of dolphins swimming nearby to distract you every time you tried to focus on the tiny little blip bobbing on the ocean. For some reason Jennifer and Fritz had an easier time with that one, but for me, the second bird was definitely “better view desired”.

We moved on to the Aiguamolls de l’Emporda wetlands where we ate lunch at a platform overlooking the marsh near the Depuradora. There we picked up more common wetland species: **grey heron and purple herons, little egret, white stork (flying), great cormorant, mallard and gadwall, moorhen and coot, great reed warbler and common reed warblers, and western marsh harrier**. Stephen was so intrigued that I got excited about a **little grebe**, but I like them. They’re cute little things. We also had a flyover **buzzard** and a couple of **common cuckoos**.

After lunch, we went to a nearby flooded grassy field where we had a **glossy ibis** and a few shorebirds: **common sandpiper, wood sandpiper, northern lapwing, and black-winged stilt**. Another nearby muddy field had **ruffs and curlew sandpipers, and European golden plover, common ringed plover, and little ringed plovers**.

Finally it was time for the long drive back to Sitges. Stephen dropped us off at about 5 PM. I checked in to the hotel, relaxed a bit, and bought some supplies for the next day. Then Fritz, Jennifer, and I walked along the shore for a bit before a typically late Spanish meal at a restaurant recommended by our hotel.

May 19 – Garraf Massif and Llobregat Marshes

Had a bit of a lie-in this morning – Stephen picked us up at 6:30.

Our first stop was a cliff-face overlooking the Garraf marina for one of my targets: **pallid swift***. On the walk out to the colony we also picked up **blue rock-thrush** and a couple **black redstarts**. The swifts were nesting in a crack in the cliff face but were constantly flying out to forage. We saw them quite well and noted all of the field marks, especially since there were a few common swifts mixed in. While looking at the swifts trying for the perfect view, Stephen noted a fly-by **Audouin’s gull*** or two.

Partway down the cliff, we saw a pair of nesting yellow-legged gulls and a pair of nesting **shags**. Stephen also pointed out a nesting **peregrine** on the cliff-top and while we were watching one of that pair, a second bird – likely the female - came in carrying a large prey item. After a while we figured out it was a magpie! She flew around with the magpie for several minutes calling constantly. We assumed she was trying to encourage the young to fledge. And we all agreed that was one of the more unique sights we’d ever seen.

It was then time to go up to the top of the massif. We parked at a lookout and started to walk up a paved road. Sardinian warblers were calling everywhere along with corn buntings. Stephen pointed out that the swifts up there were **alpine swifts** which gave us three swift species in one morning. He then heard an **Ortolan bunting** singing and after a slow stalking of the bird we caught up to it. On the way, we noted a few **spotless starlings** flitting around a small house.

We walked up to the top of the road in a light drizzle and onto a side trail constantly on the lookout for Dartford warbler, another one of my targets (which we didn't find). We did find a **black-eared wheatear** of the white-throated morph and a spotted flycatcher. Eventually we continued over the top to a lookout where, and Stephen knew Bonelli's eagle might be found. We could see Barcelona in the distance. While waiting we spotted a **woodchat shrike*** on a fence. But after about 45 minutes of scanning the horizon and the electrical towers, no eagle showed up. We eventually made it back to the car, a little soggy but pleased with a **southern/Iberian grey shrike** and another black-eared wheatear, this time of the black-throated morph, on the way.

We then headed back down to the lowlands and the Llobregat Marshes. This nice little patch of marshland is just beside Barcelona Airport. It's small, but it's definitely is worth visiting. And if you tire of the birds, you can always try plane-spotting. Great reed and **Cetti's warblers** were everywhere, and Stephen pointed out the song of a common reed warbler that wouldn't show itself. We also got a good look at the **iberiae yellow wagtails** which were common in the marshes.

We made it to the main hide about thirty minutes before a large group of schoolchildren, which gave us plenty of time to review what was there. Shorebirds included stilts, many **common redshanks**, a single **greenshank**, common ringed, little ringed, and **Kentish plovers**, and northern lapwing. Stephen found a **little stint** and a **Temminck's stint** and we all got a good look at them together through the scope. Other water birds included mallard, **pochard**, gadwall, and **common shelduck**, grey heron, little egret, little grebe, common moorhen, and several coots. There were both yellow and **white wagtails**. I also picked out a **purple swamphen** working its way through the reeds. We moved on (as did all the other birders) when the school kids showed up.

After lunch, we headed back up into the hills. Near a stone quarry, Stephen saw a few **crag martins**, and while Fritz and Jennifer tried to follow a fly-by **hobby**, I went after a singing **cirl bunting***. I eventually found it on some wires. We then headed to a farm where Stephen had permission to bird. There we turned up a **whinchat**, a **stonechat**, and a few **barn swallows**. We got out of the car at a small patch of woods where we heard a **chaffinch**, which Stephen said was late for the area – most have headed north. Eventually we found the chaffinch along with a goldfinch, and while looking for that, we heard a western Bonelli's warbler, another of my targets. Unfortunately, that buried itself deep in the woods and never showed.

We continued up into some more forest edge habitat as it started to rain and picked up a **wood warbler** (which I saw) and a **willow warbler** (which I missed) along with some **linnets**. Further on in some deeper pine woods, we found a flock of **long-tailed tits** with a **firecrest** mixed in. Finally, coming back down into some farm land, Stephen picked out a pair of **red-legged partridges***, a bird I saw in Scotland a few years ago but didn't count.

That about wrapped it up for our rainy afternoon, so we headed back to Sitges. We had a nice dinner at a small restaurant called La Oca (The Goose) in the pedestrian zone that Stephen recommended that kept more friendly hours.

May 20 – Lleida Steppes (and Transit to Andorra)

Today's plan was to head out to one of the last remaining patches of steppe habitat beyond Lleida to a spot that Stephen knew for DuPont's lark. The plan was to settle in at that spot until the lark showed and in the process the other key steppe species would likely show themselves. If after the lark showed we hadn't seen those targets, we'd look for them specifically.

That was the plan. The good news was that Tuesday's rain had stopped. The bad news was that the wind picked up. Not good.

We turned off the autopista in the middle of nowhere. Just after that we turned off the paved road onto an unpaved track where we found three **stone-curlews*** in a dirt field. Further along the track we stopped at nondescript pull-off in the middle of a field to wait for the DuPont's. It was about 7 AM. And it was cold! We all put on another layer. I wished I had gloves.

We settled in for our vigil. **Calandra larks** were displaying everywhere with a few **thekla larks** mixed in. Stephen pointed out a distant **lesser short-toed lark**, too. We had a hobby fly by as well as a couple of white storks. Then a **great spotted cuckoo** came into a nearby bush and Stephen got that in the scope. We heard the DuPont's once or twice but it was too windy for it to show.

After a while, we hopped back in the car (mostly to get warm) and did a quick drive-around. We found a few **choughs** – a lifer for Fritz – at a nearby ruined barn, then turned up a **little bustard*** and a few new larks, **greater short-toed lark** and **crested lark**. Then it was back to the stake-out.

We waited there some more waiting for the wind to die down. It didn't. We heard the DuPont's once or twice again, but every lark that showed itself was a calandra or thekla. Stephen pointed out to me that any lark that flew in and sat up on a bush was not going to be the DuPont's. The DuPont's would walk up onto a perch from the ground. That helped reduce the number of "Is that it?" requests, but it didn't help find the bird.

At about 9:30 we decided that we'd make another pass through the fields. Stephen started seeing sandgrouse flying and eventually eight **black-bellied sandgrouse** settled down out of the wind. We carefully got out of the car and Stephen set up the scope. Great views. Eventually those birds flew, but just as we got back in the car, two **pin-tailed sandgrouse** settled down in the same place. Once again we slowly climbed out and we got an even better look at those two – a male and a female.

After a few more sweeps through the fields which allowed us a nice side-by-side comparison of greater and lesser short-toed larks we went back to the DuPont's site one last time. This time, we never heard the bird, so at about 11 AM we reluctantly decided to move on. Stephen said it was the first time he missed it this year.

We moved on to another area, that might normally have had black wheatear, but with the wind they were hunkered down. We did find a nice pair of close **rollers**, though. Nearby was a nice ridgeline that we could observe from a distance. We stopped there for lunch.

While eating lunch, Stephen heard a distant **spectacled warbler***. Eventually it came in closer and we got it in the scope. We then started scanning the ridge top for raptors. Fritz found a **Eurasian griffon** and while we were looking at that, Stephen found an immature **golden eagle** in the scope. We watched it fly around with a black kite. Then we turned up a light phase **booted eagle**. This was a nice little hawk-watch!

Next stop was a quick check-out of a woodland where red-necked nightjar had been seen in previous years. Stephen said they hadn't shown up this year, so he wasn't optimistic. He checked a few places where they'd roosted in the past, but came up empty. We did get a good look at a **hoopoe** for Fritz and Jennifer though.

We just had enough time for one last stake-out, so we drove back towards Lleida to a location for Eurasian eagle-owl and a final shot at black wheatear. On the way, we passed a field full of at least 20 black kites (sadly, no reds) and another Iberian grey shrike. Eventually we pulled up in this narrow valley at the base of a cliff.

Stephen warned us that the young owls had recently fledged, so they might not be as easy to find. While he was looking I found a female **black wheatear*** at the top of the cliff, and Stephen found the male nearby while getting the scope on the female. We then went back to looking for the owl. When Stephen chuckled “You cheeky @#%\$” we knew he’d found the **Eurasian Eagle-owl**. It was tucked into the base of a bush. He got the scope on it and it stared right back at us with those big orange eyes. Nice.

I had a bus to catch, so we headed to Lleida. Stephen dropped me at the bus station and I said my good-byes to everyone. Three hours, 16€, and two transfers later I was in Andorra. Interestingly, everybody else got off the bus in La Seu de Urgell. I was the only passenger on the 40-seater coach as we crossed into Andorra.

First bird in Andorra: feral rock pigeon. It figures.

May 21 – Andorra

I really had only one target in Andorra, citril finch, so I needed to get to some higher altitudes. My original plan was to take the local bus (1.80€) to La Massana and ride the telecabina to the top of the ski slope, but when I arrived, there was a “Telecabina closed. Sorry for the inconvenience.” sign on the door. In fact, the tourist information office was closed, too. So I hopped on the next bus to Arinsal town and took it to the end of the line. I poked around in the semi-residential area at the end of the road, but only turned up great tit, **coal tit**, serin, blackbird, and black redstart. I tried the circular nature trail a bit, but it was too steep and too wet, so I came back down.

As I came back to the trail head, I saw a gate up on the hillside – a wide open trail. I started up that and discovered it was a ski slope that zigzagged up the mountainside. That’s what I needed! So I headed up that. It was mostly open, but every so often there’d be a side trail into the woods or a nice thicker woodlot on one of the bends.

One side trail turned up a **jay**, a **great spotted woodpecker**, and a signing **robin** (heard only). At one bend in the trail I heard a trilling sound that sounded encouraging. I tried the citril finch tape. No response. So I tried cirl bunting. Still no response. Then I realized that it might be **western Bonelli’s warbler***. So I tried that tape and bam! It comes a little phylloscopus scolding and singing. Not a bird I expected there, but a welcome surprise, making up for the one we’d missed in Garraf.

I made it about ¾ of the way to the top adding only a **raven** fly-by, a few chaffinches, and a firecrest. I was exhausted and other than chaffinches it was fairly unbirdy, so I went back down to the end of the road. I heard a distant **chiffchaff** there. I lastly turned up a lone **crag martin** flying around and roosting on the ledge of a hotel at the bottom. After that it was a long walk back to Arinsal town. Most everything was closed for the off-season, but I eventually found a pizza joint open for lunch.

I then hopped back on the bus back to Andorra la Vella and spent the afternoon sightseeing in town. In the process, I turned up a **grey wagtail** on the river, the only one for the whole trip, and a collared-dove and some manky mallards in the city park.

Thus ended my birding in Andorra. I missed the citril finch but found the western Bonelli's warbler that I missed in Spain. A decent trade, in my opinion.

May 22 – Transit to Mallorca

Most of this day was spent in transit. I first took the 9 AM Novatel direct bus from Andorra la Vella to Barcelona Airport for 33€, where I connected to a RyanAir flight to Palma, arriving at about 3 PM. After picking up my rental car, I was on my way to Port de Pollença. I quickly checked in at my hotel, then made a dash to the Depuradora at the south end of S'Albufera where marbled duck had been recently reported. As it was, I didn't need to rush. I had plenty of daylight left as it gets dark fairly late in Spain.

I didn't have a scope with me, so making sense of the distant ducks with just binoculars was a challenge. I did see lots of pochard, common shelduck, mallard and gadwall, along with plenty of common coots. Many of the birds had young birds with them, which complicated things, but nothing looked like a marbled duck to me. All the ducks were just too distant.

Other birds at the ponds were many black-winged stilts, several **common terns**, and a few **cattle egrets**. Cetti's warblers and nightingales called in the reeds and a couple **cirl buntings** made a brief appearance. Flying over the fields were large flocks of swifts dive-bombing the platform along with barn swallows and a few bank swallows (sand martins). A few marsh-harriers flew over the marshes and fields and I even turned up a distant **booted eagle** overhead.

I was starting to get hungry and the light was fading so I headed out, finding a pair of **hoopoes** courtship-feeding on a wall along the entrance road along with a single **bee-eater** that perched on a chain-link fence. Eventually I made it back to Port de Pollença, where I saw a few fly-by **Audouin's gulls** as I pulled in at the hotel.

A nice seafood dinner capped a long, tiring day.

May 23 – Mallorca

I woke up early this morning and while lying in bed at 5 AM I heard a **scops-owl** toot a couple of times. This bird had been resident in the area behind my hotel in previous years, but had become less reliable this year. I was lucky to have heard him, and this was the only time he would make an "appearance" during my stay.

The goal this morning was the only Clements-approved endemic on Mallorca, Balearic warbler, so I headed to the Boquer Valley at first light. The parking lot was teeming with **greenfinches** and house sparrows, but no migrants, so I quickly headed past the finca into the valley. A **common pheasant** called from the fields below as I headed up the trail.

I had a bit of a distance to go until the habitat for the Balearic warbler but I still compulsively checked any obvious movement in the scrub along the trail, only to find it was always a Sardinian warbler. There were also **blue rock thrushes** calling from the cliff faces and I heard one song that I'm pretty sure was a **(Eurasian) wren**.

When I got closer to the habitat for the warbler, I sat down for a rest and listened to the recording of the warbler's calls I had. As I did so, another birder (John from London) walked by, and we joined together in the quest. He pointed out a **spotted flycatcher of the Balearic race**, a potential split.

Once we reached the point where the trail forked and then went steeply down to the ocean, we tried his tape of the song and almost immediately got what we thought was a distant answer. We poked around a bit in that area, when he spotted a **Balearic warbler*** hopping around on the ground just a few meters from us. I was surprised how long the bird's tail was. The field guides really don't show it well. It reminded me of a prinia.

We watched it forage for several minutes and he tried to get some decent photos before that bird flew off. I didn't see much point in going any further, that is, down the steep hill, so I decided to head back. I lost the trail and had to do a little bush-whacking but eventually refound my way. On the way back I, found a few linnets and a **woodchat shrike** and heard another wren. I made it back to the parking area at about 10 AM. After a quick stop at my hotel to drop some clothing layers, I drove to the S'Albufera reserve. Once again, my goal was marbled duck.

I grabbed the last available parking space in the main lot, and headed up the main trail. I ran into a birder from Germany on his way out who told me there was a pair of marbled ducks sleeping on an island at the main hide near the visitor's center. So I headed that way, birding as I went. I had a nice look at a goldfinch right above the trail, and heard plenty of Cetti's warblers, nightingales, and great reed warblers. The egret colony along the canal was active with little egrets, cattle egrets, and also some **black-capped night herons**. And perched on an electrical tower near the colony was an **osprey**.

Eventually, I made it to the visitor's center and the hide and was surprised to find it empty. But I settled in and started scanning the marsh. All of the resident dabbling ducks were there: mallard, common shelduck, common and **red-crested pochards**, and gadwall. Then, after a bit of scanning I turned up the pair of **marbled ducks***, directly in front of the hide, right where they were supposed to be. Since I was alone in the hide, I raised my arms in celebration.

I settled in and started looking at all the other birds. Stilts were conspicuous and noisy. Little ringed and Kentish plovers were all there in numbers, but no other shorebirds. A great snipe had been reported a couple days before but that had since gone. There was a grey heron and some common moorhens foraging further away from the hide, along with a fly-by purple heron and a distant large flock of small ducks, which I believe were **garganey**. There was also a rabbit nibbling on some grass just below the hide. Eventually, the hide began to fill up, so I gave up my seat and started exploring some of the trails in the area.

I headed for the ponds which Gosney's book said were good for red-knobbed coot, getting delayed by what should have been an easy-to-see great reed warbler that instead made me work to see it. Eventually I got to the ponds and found a coot with a neck-collar. Then I found another un-ringed **red-knobbed coot** foraging near the reeds. That one took a run at a **little bittern** that got too close to it. *That* was different! At this point I also heard a **moustached warbler**, but it was on the far side of a canal and wouldn't reveal itself. So I settled for a few pictures of the coot and worked my way back to the visitor's center and then back to the car.

Next was a run across Port de Pollença to the Formentor Peninsula. Since it was early afternoon I figured it would be crowded, but I had no idea there would be so many cyclists. On those winding roads, it basically slowed any climb to bicycle speed. Not pleasant. I made it to the mirador, but there

was no place to park, so I tried the road up to the Albercutx tower. Still quite a few cars, but I eventually made it to the top and found a place to park.

I walked up the last stretch of the road and heard a falcon calling. I tried to get closer to the cliff edge, and an **Eleonora's falcon*** came right in and tried to perch in a palm right near me. Then it saw me and flew off. I hung around for a while more, scanning the ocean for sea birds, and had another fly-by Eleonora's. I didn't bother to climb up to the tower itself, since I already had my main target.

After a while, I moved on and headed to the lighthouse at the end of the road. Again, finding a place to park was a major challenge. I climbed up to the lighthouse with the crowds and scanned the ocean for a while. There was a huge pod of dolphins at the base of the cliffs, but I couldn't turn up any seabirds other than gulls. Heading back from the lighthouse wasn't quite as onerous, since the cyclists were still mostly heading to the point.

On the way back I stopped in the pine woods at km 10-11. Immediately after getting out of the car I heard many chaffinches, but also some distant crossbills. I spent about a half hour going back and forth across the road, looking for crossbills. While scanning the tops of the trees, a **black vulture** flew over. That was a surprise! Eventually I found a **crossbill**, albeit not well seen, but I was satisfied.

So where to go next? I was planning on going to Cuber reservoir the next morning, not to mention I wasn't really in the mood for another winding mountain road (and more cyclists). I still wanted a shot at Dartford warbler, but that would require a 2 km walk each way at Son Real, which I didn't fancy in the middle of the afternoon. Since the red-footed falcon influx had apparently also come to Mallorca, and I might have a chance for a red kite, I chose to head to the central plain near Muro and Santa Margalida.

I spent some time driving around the various roads. I found a few stonechats, and both thekla and greater short-toed larks, as well as the more expected corn buntings and zitting cisticolas. Eventually I found a **lesser kestrel** perched in a tree, but it was back-lit. When I drove on to get a better angle, I saw a falcon hunting over a field. I took the barely passable track into the fields and saw more falcons. At one point, I had five **red-footed falcons** and three lesser kestrels all hunting at the same time.

It was still very hot, but I figured it would cool off by the time I was done, so I then made the short run to Son Real to make a last desperate attempt at Dartford warbler. On my way in, I found lots of people heading back to the trailhead, very few of whom were birders. I made a wrong turn and ended up at a closed visitor's center and fence before reaching the shoreline, but I found a ladder over the fence and made my way to the beach. I walked along the beach and eventually found the wooden platform mentioned in Gosney. Unfortunately, it was very windy and nothing wanted to come out of the scrub. Knowing I had 2 km to hike back, I eventually gave up. On the way back I heard a hoopoe and saw the usual common birds (Sardinian warbler, corn bunting, house sparrow).

Since I'd skipped lunch, I decided to call it an early night. I decided to try a touristy steak house in Alcudia beach. I had wings and fajitas for dinner. What can I say? I needed a switch from the seafood.

May 24 – Mallorca

This morning's goal was Cuber Reservoir and the Moltoni's warbler. According to most authorities, this is a legitimate species with a very restricted range, but according to Clements, it's still a subspecies of subalpine warbler. Either way, it would be a lifer for me, so I wanted to see it.

On the drive there I spooked dozens of woodpigeons off the road, and arrived just as the sun was peeking over the mountains. I walked down towards the dam hearing nothing but chaffinches (and some very noisy sheep). Eventually I took the trail beyond the dam, and heard a warbler calling up on the hillside beyond a fence. I bush-whacked a bit up the hillside and got a bit of a view. I kept moving around hoping for a better look, and eventually saw the **Moltoni's warbler*** from many angles, noticing the barely visible moustache that helps distinguish Moltoni's from the typical subalpine.

By the time I climbed back up to the dam, more tourists and picnickers were starting to show up, so I walked back to the car, getting another good look at the Balearic spotted flycatcher subspecies, and headed to Lluc Monastery for some sightseeing.

By this point, the only remaining needs for the trip were raptors, specifically Bonelli's eagle or red kite, so I stopped at Mortitx, which had been suggested as a spot for the eagle. I headed into the vineyards, and heard what I thought was a kestrel, but after a few minutes I realized it was coming from the trees, and therefore must have been a **wryneck**. Eventually it responded to tape and I saw it fly over.

I found the trail into the scrub hoping for a better look at the mountainsides, but decided to turn back when I saw a sign warning about the dangers of that particular trail. On the way back, I had a warbler that played hide-and-seek for a while. It sounded like a Sardinian, and the habitat was certainly right, so I tried that tape. Nothing. So just for fun, I tried the Dartford warbler tape. And it came in. After a little more hide-and-seek I finally got a good look at it. Sardinian. Oh well.

I tried to find a different way back through the woods, and turned up a couple more wrynecks, but eventually went back the way I came through the vineyard. At this point I noticed a distant falcon over the upper (inland) end of the valley, so I sat on one of the vineyard walls to watch it soar around. Eventually two of its friends showed up, and I got good looks at those: **Eleonora's falcons**. Eventually, they soared out of sight, so I headed back down to the coast.

I decided to give the Depuradora another go, mainly because the platform would allow for a wide view over the fields and possibly some raptors. There really wasn't much different there than two days before. I unsuccessfully tried to turn the numerous marsh harriers into red kites, and after a while the skies started to darken a bit, and I headed out. Once again I had a lone **bee-eater** on the way out.

I started working my way back to Port de Pollenca, checking out the various stops in Gosney that I'd passed up the day before. First stop was Ses Salines. There were mostly common shelducks and coots, and a lone Kentish plover in the impoundments. There was a pair of stonechats in the reeds, and once I got to the end of the path, I saw seven **bee-eaters** on the wires at the now-private Son Bosc. On the way back out, I found a snake, which somebody later identified as a viperine snake.

Next stop was Tucan Marsh. I was astounded by the sheer number of coots there and there were quite a few little grebes (with young) there too. Then on to Albufuereta, via the "slip road" mentioned in Gosney. Part of the site was posted as private property and closed, and the other part was dead quiet. So I decided to drive some of the "Pollenca Back Lanes" just to see if I could turn up a stone curlew.

As I drove behind Albufuereta, I saw a distant **great egret**, the only one of the trip. One or two of the fields closer to Puerto Pollenca had a **tawny pipit** or a thekla lark, and there were quite a few stonechats among the corn buntings and zitting cisticolas, but no stone curlews. Once I made it back to Port de Pollenca, I called it a day.

Since it was my last night on Mallorca, it was back to seafood for dinner. A walk along the shore after dinner turned up a few **Audouin's gulls** on the breakwater.

May 25 – Mallorca and Back to Barca

A quick request for information on BirdForum the night before sent me to the road to Soller for one last shot at red kite. I tried the Son Reus dump, but that was pretty much a non-event. There was no longer an open-pit landfill, or if there was, I couldn't find it. Most of the landfill was sealed and the garbage was being disposed of by incinerator, so there were only a handful of yellow-legged gulls and a lone little-ringed plover foraging in a smelly little stream leaking out of the landfill.

The Alfabia Gardens were also recommended, but they weren't open yet, so I decided to take the old winding road up over the mountains. Before I knew it I was starting down the other side, so I pulled over and just decided to scan the ridge top. As I did, a **griffon vulture** soared into view, followed by a **black vulture**, and then another griffon. Before I knew it I had a kettle of vultures. As I was counting them (5 black, 3 griffon), I noticed a smaller bird in the kettle. It was a **red kite!*** And as I watched them all soar around, a black kite joined the kettle.

Eventually they all soared away, and the birding was done. I made a quick stop in Palma to look at the Cathedral and headed to the airport and back to Barcelona. I spent the rest of the afternoon wandering around some parts of the city that I'd missed on the first few days. Once again, I didn't bring the bins with me.

Bird List (* = lifer)

Common Shelduck – *Tadorna tadorna*: A few at Llobregat marshes. Common at all the wetlands on Mallorca.

Gadwall – *Anas strepera*: A few at every wetland we visited.

Mallard – *Anas platyrhynchos*: Good numbers at every wetland.

Garganey – *Anas querquedula*: One large flock at S'Albufuera

Marbled Teal* – *Marmaronetta angustirostris*: A pair at the main hide at S'Albufuera.

Red-crested Pochard – *Netta rufina*: Several at S'Albufuera.

Common Pochard – *Aythya ferina*: A few at Llobregat marshes. Many at the Depuradora on Mallorca.

Red-legged Partridge* – *Alectoris rufa*: A pair in the farmland at the bottom of the Garraf Massif.

Common (Ring-necked) Pheasant – *Phasianus colchicus*: One heard at the Finca at the entrance to the Boquer Valley.

Little Grebe – *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: One each at Aiguamolls and Llobregat marshes on the mainland. Many with young at Tucan Marsh on Mallorca.

Balearic Shearwater* – *Puffinus mauretanicus*: Two at Cap de Creus lighthouse.

White Stork – *Ciconia ciconia*: A few in the Cap de Creus area and a fly-by pair on the Lleida steppes.

Great Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax carbo*: One flying bird at Aiguamolls marsh.

European Shag – *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*: A pair nesting on the cliffs at Garraf. Another single bird at S'Albufera.

Cinereous (Black) Vulture – *Aegypius monachus*: A fly-over on the Formentor Peninsula and five birds in a mixed kettle at the top of the old Soller Rd.

Eurasian Griffon – *Gyps fulvus*: One seen in the Lleida steppes and three in the mixed kettle at the top of the old Soller Rd.

Short-toed Eagle – *Circaetus gallicus*: One at the cork-oak forest at Cap de Creus and another in the Lleida Steppes.

Booted Eagle – *Hieraetus pennatus*: One seen in the Lleida steppes and another over the Depuradora in Mallorca.

Golden Eagle – *Aquila Chrysaetos*: One immature bird seen in the Lleida steppes.

Eurasian Marsh-harrier: *Circus aeruginosus*: A few at Aiguamolls. Common at the Mallorca wetlands.

Red Kite* – *Milvus milvus*: One in the mixed kettle at the top of the old Soller Rd.

Black Kite – *Milvus migrans*: One outside Figueres, a large flock in a field in the steppes, and one in the mixed kettle at the top of the old Soller Rd.

Common Buzzard – *Buteo buteo*: One flying over at the Aiguamolls marsh.

Little Bustard* – *Tetrax tetrax*: One in the Lleida steppes.

Purple Swamphen – *Porphyrio porphyrio*: One at the Llobregat marsh.

Common Moorhen – *Gallinula chloropus*: Common. A few at pretty much every wetland.

Red-knobbed Coot – *Fulica cristata*: A few at S'Albufera including one with a neck-band.

Common Coot – *Fulica atra*: Common at all wetlands. Hundreds at Tucan Marsh.

Stone Curlew (Eurasian Thick-knee) – *Burhinus Oedicnemus*: Three birds on the Lleida steppes. I couldn't find any on Mallorca, but others found them while I was there.

Black-winged Stilt – *Himantopus himantopus*: Common to abundant at every wetland.

European Golden-plover – *Pluvialis apricaria*: One in a muddy field near Aiguamolls.

Northern Lapwing – *Vanellus vanellus*: One at Aiguamolls and another at Llobregat.

Kentish Plover – *Charadrius alexandrinus*: A couple birds at Llobregat. More common on Mallorca.

Common Ringed Plover – *Charadrius hiaticula*: A few at Aiguamolls and Llobregat. Not seen on Mallorca.

Little Ringed Plover – *Charadrius dubius*: Pretty much seen at any shallow wetland. The most common small plover.

Common Sandpiper – *Actitis hypoleucos*: One seen in a wet grassy field at Aiguamolls.

Common Greenshank – *Tringa nebularia*: One seen at Llobregat.

Wood Sandpiper – *Tringa glareola*: One seen in a wet grassy field at Aiguamolls.

Common Redshank – *Tringa totanus*: Quite a few at Llobregat.

Ruff – *Calidris pugnax*: Three in a muddy field at Aiguamolls.

Curlew Sandpiper – *Calidris ferruginea*: Also in the muddy field at Aiguamolls.

Temminck's Stint – *Calidris temminckii*: One seen at Llobregat.

Little Stint – *Calidris minuta*: A couple seen with the Temminck's at Llobregat.

Audouin's Gull* – *Ichthyæetus audouinii*: A couple fly-bys along the coast at Garraf. Fairly common along the beaches in NE Mallorca.

Yellow-legged Gull – *Larus michahellis*: Abundant everywhere except Andorra where not seen.

Common Tern – *Sterna hirundo*: A few on Mallorca, mostly at the Depuradora.

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse – *Pterocles alchata*: A pair seen well, plus a few fly-bys on the Steppes.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse – *Pterocles orientalis*: Eight seen well, plus a few fly-bys on the Steppes.

(Feral) Rock Pigeon – *Columba livia*: Abundant. Disgustingly so in Barcelona.

Common Wood Pigeon – *Columba palumbus*: Fairly common on the mainland, but abundant on Mallorca.

Eurasian Turtle-dove – *Streptopelia turtur*: Only one seen (in flight) outside Figueres.

Eurasian Collared-dove – *Streptopelia decaocto*: Scattered sightings in city parks and on Mallorca.

Great Spotted Cuckoo – *Clamator glandarius*: A couple seen in the steppes.

(Eurasian) Common Cuckoo – *Cuculus canorus*: One seen and another heard at Aiguamolls.

Eurasian Scops-owl – *Otus scops*: Heard briefly between the Hotel Pollentia and the Pollenca Park Hotel one morning.

Eurasian Eagle-owl – *Bubo bubo*: One seen at a stake-out near Lleida.

Alpine Swift – *Apus melba*: A few seen on the Garraf Massif.

Common Swift – *Apus apus*: Common to abundant.

Pallid Swift – *Apus pallidus*: Many seen at a known nest near Garraf.

European Bee-eater – *Merops apiaster*: Heard a couple times during our mainland journeys and finally seen on the steppes. Present along the Depuradora entrance road and on the wires at Son Bosc on Mallorca.

European Roller – *Coracias garrulus*: One seen outside Figueres and another two in the steppes.

Eurasian Hoopoe – *Upupa epops*: Seen in a woodland near Lleida and heard in Llobregat. A few seen on Mallorca, especially along the Depuradora entrance road.

Eurasian Wryneck – *Jynx torquilla*: One heard at the cork-oak woodland at Cap de Creus. Two (or more) heard and one seen at Mortitx on Mallorca.

Great Spotted Woodpecker – *Dendrocopos major*: One seen in the woods at Arinsal, Andorra.

Lesser Kestrel – *Falco naumanni*: One seen in a field outside Figueres. Three seen hunting with Red-footeds in the central plains on Mallorca.

Red-footed Falcon – *Falco vespertinus*: 10-12 seen in a field outside Figueres. Five seen hunting in the in the central plains on Mallorca. This was reportedly a good spring for them in Spain.

Eleonora's Falcon* – *Falco eleonora*: Two seen at the Albercutx tower on the Formentor Peninsula and three seen flying at Mortitx.

European Hobby – *Falco subbuteo*: One seen by Stephen in the Garraf and another seen by all in the steppes.

Peregrine Falcon – *Falco peregrinus*: A nesting pair seen on the cliffs at Garraf. One was flying around with a magpie it captured!

Monk Parakeet – *Myiopsitta monachus*: This established exotic is abundant (and noisy) in Barcelona parks. Also seen in Sitges.

Southern Grey Shrike – *Lanius meridionalis*: One in Garraf and one in the steppes, near Lleida. The subspecies seen was *iberiae*, which is split by some authorities as Iberian Grey Shrike.

Woodchat Shrike* – *Lanius senator*: One seen on the Garraf Massif and another in the Boquer Valley on Mallorca.

Eurasian Golden Oriole – *Oriolus oriolus*: Heard occasionally at Cap de Creus and Garraf. Not seen, but we really didn't look for it.

Eurasian Jay – *Garrulus glandarius*: One fly-by in the Garraf and another at Arinsal, Andorra.

Eurasian Magpie – *Pica pica*: Abundant on the mainland outside of the cities. Not seen on Mallorca. Peregrine food!

Red-billed Chough – *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: A few seen at an abandoned barn in the steppes.

Eurasian Jackdaw – *Corvus monedula*: Scattered sightings in the Catalunyan countryside.

Carrion Crow – *Corvus corone*: A few in the Cap de Creus area.

Common Raven – *Corvus corax*: One in the steppes and another in Andorra. Both in flight, not perched.

Dupont's Lark – *Chersophilus duponti*: Heard only in the steppes. The key miss of the trip.

Calandra lark – *Melanocorypha calandra*: Abundant (and then some!) in the steppes.

Greater Short-toed Lark – *Calandrella brachydactyla*: A few in the steppes, and one or two in the central plains of Mallorca.

Lesser Short-toed Lark – *Calandrella rufescens*: A few more than greater in the steppes.

Crested Lark – *Galerida cristata*: A couple in the Figueres area. Also a few in the steppes, but in a shorter grass habitat than theklas.

Thekla Lark – *Galerida theklae*: Common in the steppes. Also a few in the fields of Mallorca.

Bank Swallow (Sand martin) – *Riparia riparia*: A few sightings in Garraf and the steppes. Several around the Depuradora on Mallorca.

Eurasian Crag-martin – *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: Seen by Stephen at Garraf. One Seen at Arinsal, Andorra.

Barn Swallow – *Hirundo rustica*: Scattered sightings in Garraf, Llobregat and in the steppes. Abundant around wetlands in Mallorca, especially at the Depuradora.

House Martin – *Delichon urbicum*: Scattered sightings around Garraf and in the steppes.

Coal Tit – *Parus ater*: One seen in Arinsal, Andorra.

Great Tit – *Parus major*: Not common but heard or seen most days, including in Barcelona parks and in Andorra.

Long-tailed Tit – *Aegithalos caudatus*: A flock seen in a wooded area on the Garraf Massif.

Eurasian Wren – *Troglodytes troglodytes*: A couple heard in the Boquer Valley, Mallorca.

Firecrest – *Regulus ignicapilla*: One bird seen in the flock of long-tailed tits in Garraf. Another heard in Andorra.

Willow Warbler – *Phylloscopus trochilus*: One bird seen by the others, but not by me on the Garraf massif.

(Common) Chiffchaff – *Phylloscopus collybita*: One bird heard at Arinsal, Andorra.

Western Bonelli's Warbler* – *Phylloscopus bonelli*: One bird heard on the Garraf Massif. Another seen at Arinsal, Andorra.

Wood Warbler – *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: One bird seen on the Garraf Massif.

Melodious Warbler* – *Hippolais polyglotta*: A few in the Figueres and Cap de Creus areas, and one in Garraf.

Moustached Warbler – *Acrocephalus melanopogon*: Heard at S'Albufuera and Ses Salines, but I didn't work too hard to see one.

Eurasian Reed-warbler – *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: Stephen pointed out the song of one at Llobregat, but I wouldn't have been able to tell it from the next species without his help.

Great Reed-warbler – *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: Abundant in all marshy habitats, but only seen a few times.

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) – *Cisticola juncidis*: Abundant in any open habitat (marsh, field, etc.)

Western Orphean Warbler* – *Sylvia hortensis*: A couple seen in the cork-oak woodland at Cap de Creus.

Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler* – *Sylvia cantillans moltonii*: One or two below the dam at Cuber Reservoir, Mallorca. Most authorities have split this as Moltoni's warbler, but Clements has not.

Sardinian Warbler – *Sylvia melanocephala*: Common in scrub habitat. Easily the most common warbler on the trip.

Spectacled Warbler* – *Sylvia conspicillata*: One bird seen in the steppes.

Balearic Warbler* – *Sylvia balearica*: One bird seen near the end of the Boquer Valley, Mallorca.

Spotted Flycatcher – *Muscicapa striata*: A few sightings on the mainland (ssp. *striata*) and also on Mallorca (ssp. *balearica*). The Mallorcan birds are much plainer than the mainland birds and may soon be split.

European Robin – *Erithacus rubecula*: One bird heard singing on the mountain at Arinsal, Andorra.

Common Nightingale – *Luscinia megarhynchos*: Common in scrub habitat.

Black Redstart – *Phoenicurus ochruros*: A couple seen at the pallid swift colony in Garraf and a few more at Arinsal, Andorra.

Blue Rock-thrush – *Monticola solitarius*: At least one seen well at the pallid swift colony in Garraf and a few heard in the Boquer Valley, Mallorca.

Whinchat – *Saxicola rubetra*: A couple in Garraf and in the steppes.

European Stonechat – *Saxicola rubicola*: A few in Garraf. More common in open habitats and even reed-beds in Mallorca.

Black Wheatear* – *Oenanthe leucura*: A pair at the Eagle-owl stakeout near Lleida.

Black-eared Wheatear – *Oenanthe hispanica*: A couple up on the Garraf massif and another couple in the steppes.

Eurasian Blackbird – *Turdus merula*: Common in all habitats except the steppes.

European Starling – *Sturnus vulgaris*: A few seen in Barcelona.

Spotless Starling – *Sturnus unicolor*: Scattered sightings in the Catalunya countryside. According to Stephen they are more skittish than common starlings.

Western Yellow Wagtail – *Motacilla flava*: Common at Llobregat. A few seen on Mallorca. Subspecies is *iberiae*.

Grey Wagtail – *Motacilla cinerea*: One seen on the river in Andorra la Vella.

White Wagtail – *Motacilla alba*: A few seen at Llobregat. Stephen said it was ssp. *yarelli*, but it looked more like *alba* to me.

Tawny Pipit – *Anthus campestris*: A couple in the steppes and a couple more in the fields around Port de Pollença.

Cirl Bunting* – *Emberiza cirlus*: One seen at Garraf, and another couple at the Depuradora, Mallorca.

Ortolan Bunting – *Emberiza hortulana*: One singing in the scrub habitat on the Garraf.

Corn Bunting – *Emberiza calandra*: Abundant in all open habitats. Stephen commented their song sounds like someone starting up a motor-scooter.

Common Chaffinch – *Fringilla coelebs*: One late migrant on the Garraf. Common in the mountains in Andorra and in wooded habitat on Mallorca.

European Greenfinch – *Chloris chloris*: A few at Garraf and in the Steppes. Abundant on Mallorca.

Red Crossbill – *Loxia curvirostra*: A few heard and one seen in the pines on the Formentor Peninsula, Mallorca.

European Goldfinch – *Carduelis carduelis*: A few sightings on the Garraf. More easily noticed on Mallorca (once I learned their call and song).

Eurasian Linnet – *Carduelis cannabina*: A few on the Garraf and in the Boquer Valley.

European Serin – *Serinus serinus*: Common especially in city parks.

House Sparrow – *Passer domesticus*: Abundant around habitation, especially in the cities.

Eurasian Tree-Sparrow – *Passer montanus*: A few at Cap de Creus and in the steppes.