

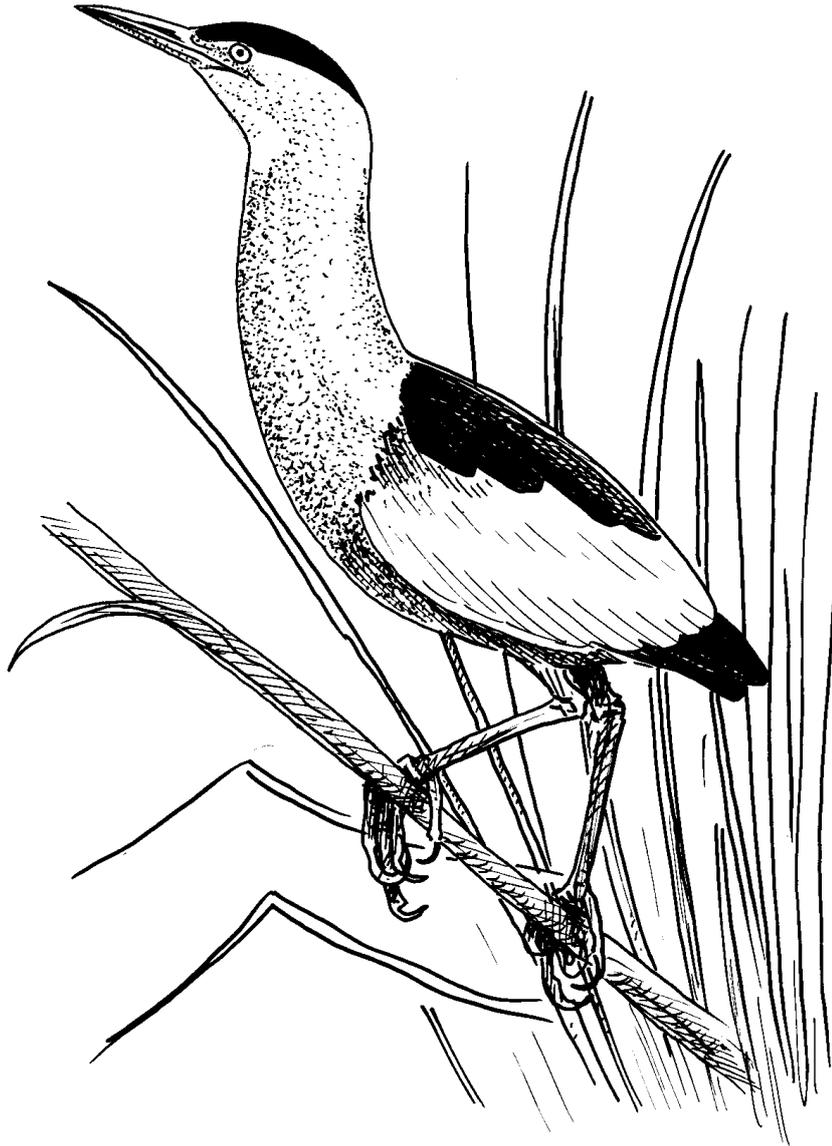
Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk



AUTUMN IN MALLORCA
30 September – 7 October 1995

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The second of Honeyguide's autumn trips to Mallorca was an ideal way to end the holiday year. To be in very pleasant weather while the UK was in a cool week always goes down well but good weather does not bring in the big falls of migrants; this year was very good weather but the lack of migrants was more than compensated for by some of the island's own birds. Everyone will probably have their own memory; the school of dolphins being followed by Cory's shearwater, purple gallinule jumping around the reeds, the little bittern feeding so obligingly for the telescope, moustached warbler preening in the afternoon sun, or the hoopoes, with us every day but always stealing the show.

As always, this holiday contributed to the protection of the wildlife that we enjoyed by way of a donation to the Balearic Ornithological Group (GOB). A thank you letter from GOB's Graham Hearl appears at the end of this report. This holiday's contribution of £200, made up of £25 per person in the group, was part of a total of £700 given to GOB through three Honeyguide holidays to the Balearics in 1995, and £1,970 since the first Balearic Honeyguide holiday in 1992. Over £7,905 has been contributed to conservation projects in Europe since Honeyguide started in 1991.

Thank you for your company and a very enjoyable week. I hope to see you on other tours with Honeyguide in the future.

Best wishes

Ivan

The group

Frank and Joyce Dunn
Mary Cunningham
Derek Homer
Christine Edginton
Enid Broxup
Ken and Janet Robinson

Leaders: Ivan Nethercoat
Graham Hearl of GOB/RSPB joined the group on three days.

Saturday 30 September – Palma to Puerto Pollensa, Albufereta

A pleasant and trouble free British Midland flight to Palma where we were met by Graham Hearl, the RSPB/GOB voluntary representative on the island. After a quick transfer to our minibus for the week we were off to Puerto Pollensa, our base for what was to be a very warm and extremely pleasant week in the Mediterranean.

The timing of the flight allowed everybody to get unpacked and freshen up at the hotel before a short trip to get a feel for the island. The afternoon was spent at the Albufereta, a wonderful marshy area only a short drive from the hotel. Here there is an abandoned house conveniently located so as to give a very good vantage point over the area from where marsh harriers, stonechat and common sandpipers could be seen very well. A short walk into the Albufereta and we were on an area of limestone; in places coloured pink and white with the flowers of autumn narcissus (*Narcissus serotinus*) and the autumn crocus-like merendera, while here and there the twisting spikes of autumn lady's tresses spiralled into view.

24 little egrets were roosting nearby alongside the more familiar grey heron, while on the dryer areas large flocks of finches were feeding on the seedheads of wildflowers. Already it felt as though we had been on the island for several days and it was strange to think that only a few hours before we had been on the edge of London.

Sunday 1 October – Boquer Valley and Albufera

Our first full day. For some a very full day as there was a wonderfully enthusiastic pre-breakfast crowd. The benefit of having our own transport allowed us to drive to areas of the island not accessible by the larger coaches and this morning we took a drive along some of the small back roads. Migrants such as whinchat and redstart were feeding in the almond groves, a winter visiting kingfisher flew past along a small river while on the beach the Audouin's and yellow-legged gulls were looking to see what pickings the sunbathers had left from the day before.

After breakfast another short drive took us to the Boquer Valley, a famed area for migrants and a beautiful valley to stroll along. Highlights here were the wonderful hoopoe and the spectacular Eleonora's falcon, but these were joined by a distant wryneck and a surprise red-backed shrike, a rare vagrant for the island. A pale-phase booted eagle flew over the valley as we were watching the Eleonora's falcon and a peregrine put in a brief appearance before we headed off for lunch at the Albufera.

The National Park at Albufera is the third largest reedbed in western Europe, a 4,000 acre Minsmere! Just inside the entrance is a group of pine trees, day time roosting site of night herons. A quick look before going to the visitor centre was rewarded with a very close bird that looked spectacular through the telescope but was almost invisible to the naked eye.

The park is dominated by giant reed, a spectacular plant growing to five metres in height. Two weeks before, a freak tornado had gone through the park and reduced the reeds to one or two metres. This gave unprecedented views over the park but has as yet unknown effects on the birds. Three hides had been totally destroyed so much of the birding was to be from the paths. The star birds here were the purple gallinule and little bittern, both giving very close views, apparently unconcerned by our presence.

Some old salinas on the edge of the park are home to black-winged stilts, today joined by an immature greater flamingo and spotted redshank. These were visited on route to a water treatment works on the edge of the park. A flock of 100+ goldfinches were feeding on seedheads along with serin, linnet and greenfinch. From the wreckage of a hide overlooking the water treatment area, green sandpiper, little stint and dunlin could be seen among a very large flock of yellow-legged

gulls. Marsh harriers hunted over the distant reeds and Cetti's warbler shouted at us from the hedges, while overhead a flock of 1000+ starlings signalled autumn was soon to give way to winter.

Monday 2 October – Formentor peninsula

Another trip along the back roads before breakfast brought us to a small parking area overlooking the back of the Albufereta. These roads are full of surprises and this morning was no exception. A migrant sparrowhawk sped quickly across the marsh, soon followed by a hunting marsh harrier. The harrier soon found something of interest and quickly dropped to the ground in front of us where it stayed feeding as long as we were there. All this was accompanied by the sound of a very close wryneck announcing its presence to the world.

The day was spent along the Formentor Peninsula. This north eastern most tip of the island has some very spectacular scenery and coastline and is a prime migration site for southbound birds. The Mirador viewpoint at the start of the peninsula provides spectacular views back to the town as well as into the mouth of the Boquer valley and is a favourite stopping place on route to the lighthouse. This is a very popular trip for tourists and we were keen to get there as early as possible to avoid too much traffic. From the cliffs around the lighthouse, Eleonora's falcons regularly hunt migrant birds as they wearily head for land and today they were chasing off a peregrine as well. The cliffs are very high and the birds are flying above and below giving superb views. While watching the sea, Christine noticed a large grey shape in the water, come up to the surface and then go down again. Positive identification was impossible but a large shark seems likely, perhaps a basking shark.

As the lighthouse area soon got very busy we left for the peace of Casas Velles; this small farm area of fig fields, pine woodland and tilled fields is an important feeding area for migrants as well as home to the Balearic race of crossbill and the diminutive firecrest. The migrants today were very quiet but both of the resident species gave a wonderful show.

At the regular birdwatchers' meeting run by GOB, Frank presented the Honeyguide cheque for £200 to Graham Hearl on behalf of the group.

Tuesday 3 October – Cuber Reservoir

The mountains ! Good weather and a superbly scenic drive to Cuber reservoir in the northern mountains, one of the best areas on the island to see black vulture. The drive to the reservoir took us through some wonderful areas and a short stop on route allowed the group to watch booted eagle and migrating swallows and martins feeding alongside the resident crag martin.

At Cuber the path takes a level route around the reservoir. Surrounded by mountains and overlooked by the island's highest peak, it is a spectacular spot and excellent for birds and flowers. Today patience paid off for one or two of the party who were rewarded with good views of spectacled warbler followed by four black vultures flying along the nearest ridge and landing on the skyline in front of us. At the edge of the water, Eleonora's falcons were bathing watched by an osprey while in the stream leading into the reservoir three grey wagtails, reed warbler and blackcap were feeding on insects before carrying on their migration.

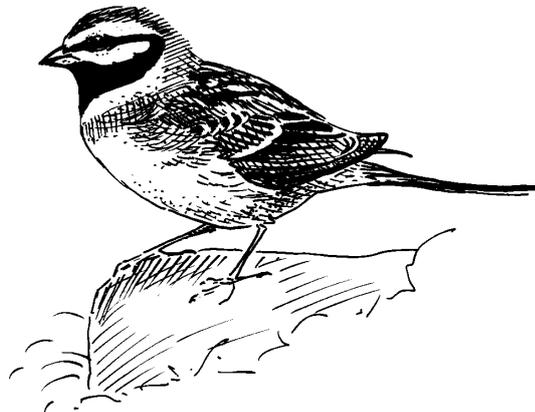
The path takes a route past a small quarry, our destination for lunch and a site for the endemic *Crocus cambessedesii*, overlooked by both rock thrush and blue rock thrush.

A stop on the way back at Lluc monastery for coffee and cake beneath several hundred house martins before a short stop back at the Albufereta.

Wednesday 4 October – Mortixt valley

A free day on the agenda. Two of the party did their own thing today, the rest accompanied me to the valley at Mortixt in the mountains. The day started with a trip to the Atalaya at Albercutxt. This is only a short drive from Puerto Pollensa but allows one of the best viewpoints on the island; from the top one can usually look down on the Boquer Valley, Casas Velles and the Albufereta. This morning however the top was covered in cloud. We persisted with the trip as it looked as if it would clear. The cloud lent a very calm atmosphere to the place and eventually cleared enough for the place to be fully appreciated. Some splendid *Arum pictum* were in flower along with the endemic Balearic St John's wort. Swallowtail butterflies flew by and a Marmora's warbler put in a very brief appearance.

With the cloud gone, the day was very hot and a short drive into the mountains brought us to the valley at Mortixt. The route took us past orchards of figs and cherries and through fields of almond and olives, some of a very great age. Here we saw rock thrush, Eleonora's falcon and lots of cirr buntings (*below*), along with some very good views of firecrest, booted eagle and a pair of peregrines. The walk ended with four Eleonora's falcons hunting insects low over the path. We were perhaps too weary to give them the attention they deserved as the thought of a long bath and a cool beer was proving too much to resist.



Thursday 5 October – Las Salinas

A drive to the southernmost tip of the island to visit a large area of old and new salt pans and the coast. Graham Hearl again joined us for the day.

The salt pans are very attractive to waders and here we had good views of black-winged stilt, bar-tailed godwit, greenshank and ruff. Star birds here though were a wonderful water rail skulking along a bank in full sunlight and a wintering flock of 15 greater flamingos. Marsh harrier and osprey put in regular appearances while a swallowtail butterfly came to inspect the party while a surprise two-tailed pasha flew past but unfortunately failed to settle.

The road to the lighthouse passes alongside fields that are often very good for stone-curlew and Thekla lark. Today the stone-curlews proved very elusive although some birds were thought to be heard calling in the distance. The larks proved much more obliging and through the telescope allowed everyone very good views of this elusive bird.

At the lighthouse the weather was wonderful; calm and clear with the sun behind us. A short walk along the beach and the whole group managed to get views of Cory's shearwater, when a school of dolphins was spotted close by. As if this was not good enough, one of the shearwaters joined them and we enjoyed the spectacle of dolphins and shearwaters just off-shore.

Another birdwatching group were good enough to leave a note on one of our vehicles giving the location of a woodchat shrike on the road back. These birds have usually left the island by October so this was a lucky find and a fitting end to our visit. After a short visit to a local hostelry it was decided to pay a visit to the night heron roost on the way back.

As we approached Pollensa it soon became clear that we had missed a severe storm in the north-east while spending a day in glorious sunshine.

Friday 6 October – Casas Vellas and Albufera

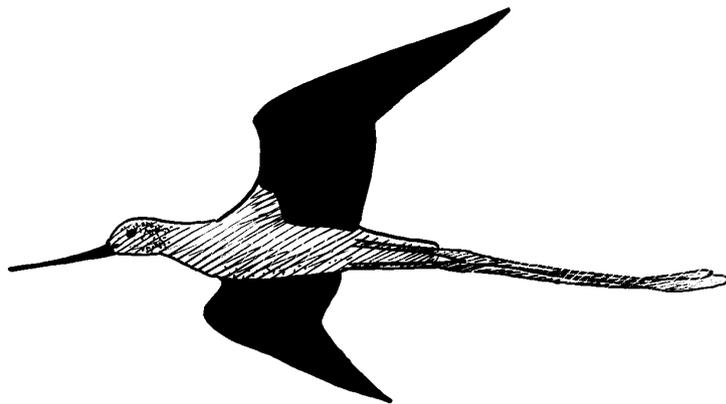
A day to revisit some sites before our return. Before breakfast a quick trip to Toucan Marsh for some wildfowl. Following breakfast we headed toward Casas Vellas and Formentor to look for some more migrants and big fish. Neither were very obvious but again the Eleonora's falcons proved stars of the area.

Lunch was to be at the Albufera again and on route we stopped along some of the back-roads visited on our pre breakfast trips. One almond grove in particular proved very productive with a second red-backed shrike, three hoopoes and numerous redstarts and finches.

Back at the Albufera the birds proved as obliging as ever. Little bittern and purple gallinule were again star performers but this afternoon also saw squacco heron and moustached warbler in full view for the telescope. The cattle egrets were doing what they do best and perching on top of cattle and already it was obvious that the winter wildfowl were starting to arrive with flocks of teal and shoveler now building up in number.

Saturday 7 October – Boquer Valley

Our last day and a final chance for a look at the Boquer valley. No new migrants this morning but the gates to the valley were locked at the farm, because of a hunting party we assumed. The shrike was still in the area along with redstart, hoopoe and rock dove. We left for breakfast and the job of filling suitcases.



BIRDS SEEN 30 SEPTEMBER – 7 OCTOBER 1995

Little grebe	Individual birds in the canals at Albufera, approx 15 at Toucan Marsh
Black-necked grebe	Four birds at the Salinas de Levante
Cory' s shearwater	Seen only from Cabo de Salinas
Cormorant	4 birds at Albufera, 1 at Toucan Marsh
Shag	Seen each day from the hotel in small numbers
Little bittern	2 birds at the Albufera
Night heron	Pines at English Bridge, Albufera 15+
Squacco heron	1 immature at Albufera 6/10
Cattle egret	3 birds at Albufera 6/10 but others may have been hidden
Little egret	Seen at all wetland sites and on breakwaters from hotel. Max of 24 roosting at Albufereta 30/9
Grey heron	Seen at all wetland sites in small numbers
Greater flamingo	15 at Salinas de Levante, 1 immature at the old salinas at Albufera later found dead
Teal	Approx 50 from Cim hide at Albufera 6/10
Mallard	Small numbers at most wetland sites
Pochard	In canals at Albufera
Red-crested pochard	Albufera
Shoveler	25+ at Depuradora
Black vulture	Up to 5 birds at Cuber
Marsh harrier	Up to 5 birds at Albufera, individuals at Salinas and Albufereta
Sparrowhawk	1 at Albufereta 2/10, 1 at Mortixx 4/10
Booted eagle	1 at Boquer 1/10, 2 at Escorca 3/10, 1 at Mortixt 4/10



Osprey	Individuals at Cuber and the Salinas
Kestrel	Individuals at Cuber, Boquer, Albufereta
Eleanora's falcon	Formentor, Boquer, Cuber, Mortixt, Salinas
Peregrine	Individuals at Boquer & Formentor, pair at Mortixt
Red-legged partridge	Small flocks in fields on route to the Cabo de Salinas
Pheasant	
Water rail	Heard at Albufera, seen well at Salinas
Moorhen	Up to 5 in Torrente de St Jordi, also at Albufera
Coot	Numerous at Albufera, also at other wetlands
Purple gallinule	Up to 4 birds seen at Albufera
Black-winged stilt	Small numbers at the old salinas at Albufera c5-10, more numerous at Salinas de Levante
Stone-curlew	Heard faintly from the road to Cabo de Salinas
Little ringed plover	4 birds at Albufereta
Ringed plover	Salinas de Levante
Kentish plover	Small numbers at Depuradora, 15+ at Albufera
Little stint	Albufera - Depuradora, Cim hide and at Salinas de Levante

Dunlin	Salinas de Levante, Albufera-Cim hide & Depuradora
Ruff	Salinas de Levante c20
Spotted redshank	5 at Albufera, Salinas de Levante
Redshank	Salinas de Levante
Greenshank	c7 at Salinas de Levante
Green sandpiper	individuals at Albufereta, Albufera
Common sandpiper	Albufereta
Black-headed gull	Pollensa bay, Depuradora
Audouin's gull	Regular feeding on scraps on the beach in Puerto Pollensa and from the PM222 road
Yellow-legged gull	Numerous on coast and large roost at Depuradora
Rock dove	2 at Boquer seemed genuine wild birds
Woodpigeon	20+ Casas Velles
Turtle dove	1, Salinas de Levante
Scops owl	Calling from behind the Guardia Civil in Puerto Pollensa
Swift	One bird with martins at Lluc
Kingfisher	Individuals in the Torrente de St Jordi and across the bay at Pollensa
Hoopoe	Seen every day, max 3 together at almond grove alongside Llenaire road
Wryneck	Heard early morning behind Albufereta, also at Boquer Valley
Thekla lark	c5 from the Cabo de Salinas road
Sand martin	Ones and twos at Albufera and Albufereta
Crag martin	Boquer Valley, Escorca
Swallow	Albufera/Albufereta mainly but seen most days
House martin	Most numerous around Escorca and Lluc with a large flock over Lluc monastery late afternoon
Wren	Casas Velles
Robin	Numerous at Casas Velles
Redstart	One of the most common migrants during the week, Boquer, back roads, Albufereta
Whinchat	Almond groves, Cuber, Albufereta
Stonechat	Numerous at Albufereta, Cuber, Boquer
Wheatear	Individual birds at Albufera, Albufereta
Rock thrush	Cuber and a very pale immature at Mortixt
Blue rock thrush	Mountains-Formentor, Cuber, Boquer
Blackbird	Seen most days
Cetti's warbler	Mainly Albufera
Fan-tailed warbler	Behind hotel, Salinas, Albufera, Albufereta
Reed warbler	Behind hotel in giant reed. Cuber
Marmora's warbler	Seen briefly at the Mirador and Atalaya de Albercutxt
Sardinian warbler	Numerous, seen every day
Blackcap	seen in ones and twos, Boquer, Cuber, Albufera
Chiffchaff	seen only in small numbers, Casas Velles, Toucan Marsh
Willow warbler	5 together at Mortixt
Firecrest	Casas Velles, Mortixt
Spotted flycatcher	Albufereta
Pied flycatcher	2 at Casas Velles
Blue tit	Mortixt
Great tit	Albufereta, Casas Velles seen most days
Red-backed shrike	2 birds, one at the end of the Boquer, one in almond grove alongside Llenaire road (back roads).
Raven	Cuber, 6 at Mortixt
Starling	seen frequently. Flock of c1000 birds over Depuradora 1/10
House sparrow	seen each day

Chaffinch	Casas Velles, Mortixt
Serin	Fairly numerous, Albufera, back roads
Greenfinch	Flock of c40 birds at Albufereta
Goldfinch	Numerous; flock of 100+ in fields on route to Depuradora
Linnet	Most lowland areas in small numbers
Crossbill	Casas Velles
Cirl bunting	Boquer, small flock at Mortixt
Corn bunting	Seen from the back roads in fig trees

INSECTS etc

<i>Calosoma</i> ground beetle	Albufereta
Capriodis tenebrionis	Boquer
Red-winged grasshopper sp	Casas Velles
Polistes .sp wasp nest	Salinas
Wall	Atalaya
Bath white	Salinas
Two-tailed pasha	Salinas
Clouded yellow	Salinas
Small white	
Swallowtail	Atalaya de Albercutxt, Salinas de Levante
Caterpillar of spurge hawkmoth	Salinas
<i>Argiope bruennichi</i> – spider	Cabo de Salinas

FLOWERS

Phoenician juniper	Cabo Salinas
Sea purslane	Albufereta
Wall pennywort/navelwort (lvs only)	Mortixt
Carob	Mortixt
<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	Mortixt
Balearic St John's wort	Atalaya de Albercuxt, Cuber
Prickly pear	common throughout
Pomegranate	Boquer valley
<i>Erica multiflora</i>	on route to Cuber
Fennel	Albufereta
<i>Verbascum</i> sp	Albufereta
Southern daisy	Cuber
Chicory	Albufereta
Sea squill	frequent, esp in mountains
Autumn squill	Cabo salinas
Asparagus	Albufereta
Common smilax	on hillsides
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>	Albufereta, Cabo Salinas
Sea daffodil	beach at Albufereta (leaves and seed only)
<i>Crocus cambessedesii</i>	Cuber
Merendera	Albufereta, Cabo Salinas
Dwarf fan pan	common throughout
Painted (autumn) arum	in flower at Atalaya de Albercutxt
<i>Arisarum vulgare</i>	Casas Velles
Autumn lady's tresses	Albufereta



Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa

L'ASSOCIACIÓ ECOLOGISTA DE LES BALEARS

DECLARADA PEL CONSELL DE MINISTRES D'UTILITAT PÚBLICA

MEMBRE DELS SEGÜENTS ORGANISMES D'ÀMBIT INTERNACIONAL:
UNIÓ INTERNACIONAL PER A LA CONSERVACIÓ DE LA NATURALESA (IUCN)
OFICINA EUROPEA DEL MEDI AMBIENT (DEMA)

Verí, 1, 3r 07001 PALMA DE MALLORCA Tel.: (971) 72 11 05 Fax: (971) 71 13 75

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays
36 Thunder Lane
Thorpe St. Andrew
Norwich NR7 0PX

27-October-1995

Dear Chris,

Re Honeyguide tour to Mallorca October 1995

Yet again we would like to express our gratitude for the extremely generous donation of £200-00 from Honeyguide and your clients resulting from your 1995 autumn tour of Mallorca.

G.O.B. is a highly active but small conservation organisation and therefore substantial donations such as this help enable G.O.B. to carry on the work of trying to protect the Mallorcan environment from the excesses of development and other pressures both commercial and natural.

The work of G.O.B. continues in this vein with current concerns being the scarcity of water resources and their proper use on Mallorca. Palma, this summer, imported water by tankers from Barcelona and have been looking at the possibility of drawing water for the town from the underground source that supplies the Albufera marsh, and have, in fact, been running field trials to this effect.

G.O.B. are very concerned that a lowering of this water table would jeopardise the marsh and are monitoring the situation closely; your donation will help greatly in this respect.

We look forward to Honeyguide's next visit to the Balearics and value their association with the islands.

Un afectuoso saludo de

Graham Hearl G.O.B./R.S.P.B. Liaison Officer.