

# 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



**Discovering Menorca**  
**8-15 April 2000**

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Participants:

Maurice Hutt  
Eric Cropper  
Margaret Cropper  
John Rumpus  
Rosemary MacDonald  
Martin George  
Barbara George  
Peter FierlingerJari Fierlinger  
Ray Riley  
Lucy Topsom

Leaders

Graham Hearl	Mallorca
Ivan Nethercoat	Sandy

Our hosts at Matchani Gran

Shaun and Jenny Murphy

The group was joined on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April by John Seymour, historian and Menorcan resident, and by Santí Catchot from the Balearic Ornithological Group (GOB) on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April. Santí was there because, as with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for GOB's work in Menorca. The cheque for £275 sent to GOB from this holiday brings the total to £3920 contributed to GOB by Honeyguide holidays in the Balearics. The total contributed to conservation projects in Europe from all Honeyguide holidays is now £20,180 (at the end of this holiday season).

The daily log in this report was written by Graham Hearl and bird notes by Ivan Nethercoat. A separate plant list was written by Martin George and was in the printed report. A thank-you letter from GOB appears at the end of the plant report. These are on the website at <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/documents/MenorcaPlants2000.pdf>

*Front cover illustration by Will Woodrow. Other illustrations by Rob Hume.*

## **Discovering Menorca 8-15 April 2000**

### Saturday 8 April – Arrival Day

I met Ivan and the party at about midday and after a short delay collecting baggage we then transferred to Matchani Gran having met Shaun Murphy, our host for the week, at the airport. The journey to Matchani Gran only takes about five minutes so we were well installed after a complimentary drink. We took lunch outside despite the cool wind and afterwards inspected the adjacent field for plants and birds. The wind was getting stronger and of course it was cloudy and the flowers were somewhat retarded due to the incredibly dry winter that the Mediterranean had experienced. We then walked the other fields belonging to Shaun, finding birds difficult to see because of the wind. Nevertheless we did see quite a few northern wheatears and a flock of seven Ravens with glimpses of Thekla lark but good views of the ubiquitous Sardinian Warbler. We finished the afternoon looking at the lee of the 'wild wood' where apart from the usual greenfinches, goldfinches and house sparrows we saw a very fine male pied flycatcher, a nice way to finish the day.

### Sunday 9 April – Tirant, Fornells, Sa Roca and Monte Toro

A few of us met for an early morning birding session at Matchani Gran where we saw a woodchat shrike and the male pied flycatcher as well as the usual Mediterranean species such as Sardinian warbler.

After breakfast we decided on a wind free day by going to Tirant. Our first stop was at the Es Mercadal water treatment works where we connected with an amazing number of booted eagles plus a couple of waders spotted by Ivan, a wood and green sandpiper. Also on the pools were a pair plus a single little ringed plover and white wagtails. Opposite the pools we heard a stone-curlew that was eventually spotted by John when we all got excellent views.

We carried on to the Tirant wetland which was totally dry due to the incredibly dry winter; however again we saw booted eagles and John spotted a red-rumped swallow. Martin decided he wanted a coffee so we travelled to Fornells as the weather continued windy with the threat of rain. We then headed for Sa Roca and took a stroll into the pine woods especially for orchids such as Purple Limadore, Early Spider and Sombre Bee orchids. The butterflies were also good with Green Hairstreak, Speckled Wood and various blues.

We lunched under the pines at Sa Roca and returned to Tirant for another look for migrants with no real luck so we finished the day at Monte Toro with another stop this time for tea. The day had been brilliant for plants with certainly a good sprinkling of migrant species, especially the booted eagles. At the evening log our total stood around forty bird species

### Monday 10 April – Son Bou and Torre d'en Gaumes

The weather was again cloudy and some rain in the morning but brightening by lunchtime and early afternoon with some rain later. Our early morning walk produced nightingale singing and a rare one, for the UK and not seen that often in the Balearics, a Turtle dove.

After breakfast we left for Son Bou, the only real reedbed in Menorca, getting there at about 9-45 a.m. We started our walk along the dunes seeing many willow warblers and the occasional common whitethroat. Out at sea we saw a few Cory's shearwaters, a new species new for most of the group. While crossing one of the small streams leading to the beach Ivan spotted a small

wader flying rapidly away - we looked along the beach and saw five avocets obviously newly in on migration and resting, the small wader turned out to be two Kentish Plovers. We retraced our steps and headed further along the coastal dunes when we spotted a marsh harrier and I heard and later saw an adult and chick purple gallinule. Ivan and I looked hard into the reeds and at least three adults and three chicks appeared on top of the reeds giving all the party fantastic views of this newly arrived species on Menorca (from the Albufera marsh on Mallorca). We had experienced a really good morning at Son Bou so we returned for lunch at the picnic site under the pines shared by a super male common redstart.

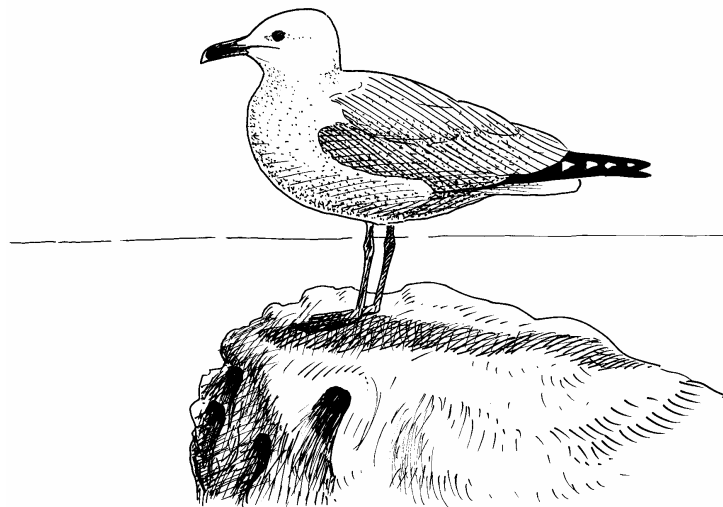
After lunch we decided on a walk at the back of the Son Bou marsh where our first birds were cattle egrets eventually seeing nine in all. A male marsh harrier put up a few waders on the only wet area of fields so we spent some time trying to locate them listening to a very close calling quail. The quail was not seen but we did get distant views of the waders which turned out to be wood sandpipers. Rain was starting to threaten and we had all left our rain gear in the vans except for Ivan so we headed back fairly swiftly.

We finished the day at Torre d'en Gaumes, a rather impressive settlement from some 1,300 BC. The evening log now showed sixty eight bird species but the list was delayed by a couple of Stripeless Tree Frogs up in the patio roof.

#### Tuesday 11 April – Mahón and Albufera es Grau

The pre-breakfast walk produced the usual resident species plus a common buzzard, probably a hangover from winter, and a nice colony of Bumblebee orchids which had been found by Rosemary the previous evening.

After breakfast we all went shopping in Mahón with a good proportion of the group meeting at the harbour side to see Audouin's gull. We succeeded well with very close views of seven birds coming down to bread - they act just like herring gulls but are, after all, one of the rarest gulls in the world. After a visit to the ceramic shop outside Mahón (even Maurice bought a piece having said that he hated ceramic shops) we lunched back at Matchani Gran where Lucy saw her first Hermann's Tortoise.



It was difficult to get people to leave after lunch especially as we were watching a rather nice Field Mouse climbing above us, but we eventually left for Albufera es Grau, the only designated reserve in Menorca. We immediately found good birds with seven black-winged stilts and little egrets. We later saw little ringed plover, a curlew sandpiper and a very probable black-necked grebe. We then walked through the woods emerging on a hillside by the Albufera lake. We again looked at the wader pool from this side and saw our previous waders much closer, plus a little stint. Returning down to the beach the plants were really good with a splendid display of pyramidal orchids, despite the dry conditions. At the beach we were stopped by a party of Cory's shearwaters plus a few Balearic shearwaters, a bit distant but in excellent light. We then discussed Posidonia – sea grass – and returned to Matchani Gran.

We had done well for waders, perhaps because Mongofre Nou is dry, but we will see on the morrow.

### Wednesday 12th April – Mongofre Nou and Cap de Favaritx

The weather was still mixed with cloud and sun but with a cool breeze. Our pre-breakfast walk did not produce anything new but it was nice to walk in the sunshine and see the sun rise.

After breakfast we drove to Mongofre Nou stopping along the way seeing Tawny Pipit and more booted eagles, of course! We also stopped on the track on the way in to Mongofre and had really good views of two male and one female blue rock thrush. Mongofre itself was not as dry as we had expected and we saw over twenty black-winged stilts and mallards, a few Kentish and little ringed plovers as well as the odd common sandpiper, plus a party of five little stint.

We lunched at the entrance to the estate and afterwards we headed for Cap de Favaritx. Here we scrambled out onto the rocks and had excellent views of both Cory's and Balearic shearwater. The afternoon was passing fairly quickly so we drove a little way back and walked out to the small lake at Capifort first stopping by the road for fantastic views of a male subalpine warbler. We saw little on this walk except for another male blue rock thrush and the lake had been farmed over but the plants were very interesting. We finished back at Matchani Gran at about 5 o'clock to be ready for our night out dining at the Bar España in Es Castell. The log prior to the evening approached eighty bird species.

### Thursday 13 April – Algendar Gorge, Naveta des Tudons and Ciutadella

The usual pre-breakfast walk produced stunning views of a pair of stone-curlews plus the usual residents as on previous days. After breakfast we drove to Algendar Gorge, situated behind Cala Santa Galdana; the weather was the best yet with sun and promising to stay all day. We spent the whole morning walking the Algendar Gorge starting off with alpine swift and with superb views of Egyptian vulture, half a coil of an adult Ladder Snake, a close view of a Moorish Gecko and views of blue rock thrush and red-rumped swallow. We saw genuine rock doves at the impressive cliffs about halfway along the gorge where we had to return as the going gets really tough from here. Other birds in the gorge included the odd booted eagle, of course, and a firecrest heard.

We lunched at the entrance to the gorge and afterwards drove to Naveta des Tudons where most of the party disappeared into the burial chamber.

To finish the day we continued on to the city/town of Ciutadella where we spent the last hour admiring the architecture of this wonderful town and the leaders saw a collared dove. With the weather still sunny two mad members of the tour went SWIMMING back at Matchani Gran, in fact Ivan had been in swimming the previous day - was it cold? YES. This evening Santi Cachot of GOB visited us and explained the current conservation work going on in Menorca and I had to explain that the usual Honeyguide cheque 'is in the post'.

### Friday 14th April – Cap de Cavallería, Monte Toro and the mosaics at Sant Climent

Our pre-breakfast walk produced the usual goodies; hoopoe, Sardinian warbler, Thekla lark and our pair of stone-curlews.

After breakfast we headed for Cap de Cavallería in super sunshine stopping at the water treatment works at Es Mercadal where there was absolutely nothing - what a comparison to the first day. Our next stop was at Tirant and again nothing of note except the pair of woodchat shrikes was still

present and obviously going to breed so we continued on to Cap de Cavallería, albeit a tad early in the day.

With the sun out and no cloud, the views of this pristine garigue area were absolutely stunning and we even saw some good birds: blue rock thrush, many tawny pipits and a really good view of an osprey flying just past us with the sun at our backs. However the special moment for me and the party was a flock of maybe two thousand Cory's shearwaters just off shore resting, fishing and generally just diddling about.

We lunched at the lighthouse and returned to the water treatment works stopping on the way for views and for a red kite. Their numbers have now dropped to just five pairs from the original one hundred and twenty pairs some twenty years ago. The water treatment works again had nothing of note so we revisited Monte Toro taking tea and seeing two swallowtail butterflies.

To finish the day and the week we visited the mosaics close to the airport - they really are probably one of the best remains to be seen on Menorca. We returned to Matchani Gran where I think about six group members actually swam!!!

At our final log the bird total was eighty two and to finish our week John Seymour lectured us on the history of Menorca and very interesting it was too.

The week had been a mixture of weather starting off with cloud, wind and threatening rain improving as the week went on to fine and sunny conditions. Migration had been rather slow all week but we did see all the bird special to Menorca and all giving excellent views. The plants had been rather special as well despite the dry conditions seeing eleven species of orchid, four species of *Cistus* plus many other Mediterranean specialities.

#### Acknowledgements

To all the party for their cheerful good humour and enjoyment of the Menorcan countryside, birds and plants. To Ivan for his cheerful good humour and helpful aid and finally to Shaun and Jenny Murphy for their wonderful hospitality at Matchani Gran – they do look after us so well.

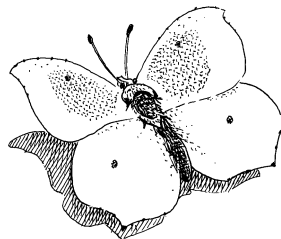
Graham Hearl, GOB/RSPB Representative, Mallorca

Bird Name	Latin Name	Notes
Little Grebe Black-necked grebe Cory's shearwater	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	`pair` at Son Bou and L'Albuferra One bird seen briefly at L'Albuferra Seen frequently out at sea. Fishing party from Es Grau, Very large flock (1500 – 2000) off Cap de Cavalleria
Balearic shearwater		Less frequent than above. Seen very close with Cory's at Cap de Favoritx
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Individual birds at coastal sites
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	9 birds at the far end of Son Bou, feeding with cattle and in wet fields
Little Egret Grey Heron	<i>Egretta garzetta</i> <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	3 at S'albufera Individual birds at Son Bou, Mongofre Nou, and S'albufera
Mallard Red Kite	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Wherever fresh water was present Individuals seen at Es Mercadel, Tirant, Mongofre Nou
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Son Bou, Cap de Cavalleria. Max 12 birds at Algendar Gorge
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	M & f Hunting at Son Bou, on migration at Cap de Cavalleria, Algendar Gorge
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Matchani Gran, Algendar Gorge
Booted Eagle	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i> <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	One, seen on route to Mongofre Nou Numerous sightings, mainly pale phase birds. 4+ together, also seen perched and hunting at the Depuradora
Osprey Kestrel Red-legged partridge Quail Moorhen	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i> <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> <i>Alectoris rufa</i> <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Collecting nesting material at Cap de Cavalleria Seen each day Tirant, , Torre d'en Gaumes, Cap de Favoritx Heard frequently. Very close at Son Bou At fresh water; Son Bou, Mongofre Nou, Algendar Gorge
Purple swamp-hen Coot Black-winged stilt	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> <i>Fulica atra</i> <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	3 adults + 3 young Son Bou Son Bou, S'Albufera 1 at Es Mercadel, 23 Mongofre Nou and 7 at S'albufera.
Avocet Stone curlew Little Ringed Plover Kentish Plover	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> <i>Burhinus oedichnemus</i> <i>Charadrius dubius</i> <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	9 resting on the beach at Son Bou Around Matchani Gran Es Mercadel (breeding?), Mongofre Nou Beach at Son Bou, Mongofre Nou
Little stint Curlew sandpiper Curlew Green sandpiper Wood sandpiper Common Sandpiper Audouin's Gull	<i>Calidris minuta</i> <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> <i>Numenius arquata</i> <i>Tringa ochrops</i> <i>Tringa glareola</i> <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> <i>Larus audouinii</i>	1 at S'Albufera, small flock at Mongofre Nou 1 at S'albufera 2 as Ses Salines near Fornells Es Mercadel Es Mercadel, Son Bou S'Albufera, Mongofre Nou 7 birds to bread at Mahon harbour; 2 at Cap de Cavalleria
Yellow-legged gull Rock dove	<i>Larus cachinnans</i> <i>Columba livia</i>	numerous Algendar Gorge, plus numerous rock/feral birds throughout the island
Woodpigeon Collared dove Turtle dove Cuckoo Scops owl Swift	<i>Columba palumbus</i> <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> <i>Streptopelia turtur</i> <i>Cuculus canorus</i> <i>Otus scops</i> <i>Apus apus</i>	Occasional sightings across the island 1 possibly 2 birds at Ciutadella Matchani Gran, Mongofre Nou Heard at S'Albufera and Algendar Gorge Heard from Matchani Gran Numerous sightings, some large flocks, over most of island
Pallid swift Alpine swift Hoopoe Thekla lark Sand Martin	<i>Apus pallidus</i> <i>Apus melba</i> <i>Upupa epops</i> <i>Gallerida theklae</i> <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Excellent views in evening light at Es Castel 2 over Algendar Gorge Numerous, esp at Matchani Gran Numerous Seen with mixed flocks of swallows and martins

Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Seen frequently in small numbers
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Occasional birds; Son Bou, Algendar Gorge
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Seen with swallows
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Tirant, Mongofre Nou and Cap de Cavalleria
Water pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	1 at Es Mercadel
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1 at Son Bou
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	11 Son Bou
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Es Mercadel, Mongofre Nou
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Heard at Algendar Gorge
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Became more frequent and in better song toward end of week. Numerous
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Odd birds seen most days. Son Bou, S'Albufera,
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1 At Son Bou
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Frequent
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Matchani Gran, Son Bou
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Mongofre Nou, Algendar Gorge, Cap de Cavalleria
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Numerous
Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Frequently heard; excellent views from car park at Son Bou
Fan-tailed warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Frequently heard
Reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	1 at Son Bou
Subalpine warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	1 at Cap de Favoritx
Sardinian warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Numerous
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Matchani Gran, Mongofre Nou
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Algendar Gorge
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Numerous
Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Numerous
Pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1 at Matchani Gran
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	Singing at Algendar Gorge
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Sa Roca
Woodchat shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Seen frequently toward end of the week.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen over most of the island. Group of 7 at Matchani Gran on first day.
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Frequent around Matchani Gran. Nesting in pylons
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Seen once at S'Albufera
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Numerous
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Numerous
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Numerous
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Refreshingly common

## Butterflies & Insects

Large white  
Painted lady  
Green hairstreak  
Speckled wood  
Cleopatra (*right*)  
Clouded yellow  
Common blue  
Small white  
Red admiral  
Small heath  
Swallowtail  
Small copper  
Wall



Hummingbird hawk-moth  
Silver Y  
Pine processionary moth caterpillars  
Rhinoceros beetle  
Oil beetle  
Paper wasp  
Egyptian locust

## Reptiles & Amphibians

Stripeless tree frogs  
Green toad  
Moorish gecko  
Wall lizard  
Ladder snake  
Hermann's tortoise