

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Autumn in Menorca
3–10 October 2012**

Recce report by Chris Gibson & Judith Poyser

Well, it had been a very dry summer, with no rain from the end of April until the week before we arrived: a parched Menorca was crying out for water. The usual first autumn rains of late August/early September simply had not happened, and as a result the 'second spring' hadn't sprung. The fields which should have been greening nicely by this time, studded with autumn-flowering plants (particularly bulbs), were brown and shrivelled, with just the first green shoots starting to appear by the time we left, some ten days after the first rain.

Of the three most anticipated botanical sights, *Narcissus serotinus* actually came into bloom during our visit (on 6 October); only a small proportion of the vast, shallow bulbs of sea squill had produced flowering spikes, the majority opting to miss a year and just throwing out the first leaves which will grow and persist until next spring; and merendera flowers were seen only at one site, on the final day, despite the abundance of suitable habitat.

And while we were there, the weather was abnormally hot and settled, typically up to 30°C by day, down to 20°C by night, with largely cloudless blue skies and light winds from the southerly sector. Too settled in fact to produce much in the way of significant bird migration – certainly, migrants were moving through, but there was no serious weather to force them to land and take refuge on the island in large numbers. But despite all the above, we still had a wonderful week, filled with spectacular wildlife sights in almost every place we visited, which covered all those we visit on spring tours and several others, some of which should prove to be useful additions to our spring itinerary as well as staples for forthcoming autumn tours. Best of all perhaps was the plethora of big bugs and beasties, by day and by night, which in the event of similar conditions featuring on future trips, will undoubtedly provide many lasting memories for the general naturalist.

BIRDS



Water birds at Es Grau, and Booted Eagle.

Resident highlights included the ubiquitous small birds of the island – Sardinian warbler, Thekla lark, great tit and corn bunting (albeit all less noisy than in the spring) and house sparrow and Cetti's warbler, typically in good voice. And then the resident raptors: the 'big three' - booted eagle, red kite and Egyptian vulture – were all widespread across the island, as were kestrels and peregrines, while an osprey was around its normal haunts in the north. At several coastal locations, Audouin's gulls were easy to find, especially in Mahon harbour. Hoopoes, stone-curlews and scops owls, at least semi-resident, if a little elusive, were all seen at Matchani Gran, although the stonies were very vocal on the still, sultry nights. Sadly, the Son Bou purple gallinules failed to show, but then we see those on only about one out of every three trips anyway. One of the more elusive Menorcan residents, Dartford warbler, sang and appeared briefly out of the clifftop scrub at Binidali.

Sadly, many of the **summer visitors** had departed, not unexpectedly. So we saw no bee-eaters, stilts, swifts or shrikes, and only a few nightingales, turtle doves and tawny pipits, and they of course could have been simply passing through the island. Offshore, despite several seawatches, there were no shearwaters to be seen – presumably the bulk of the Cory's and Balearic shearwater populations were by then feeding in Biscay and the Southwest Approaches.

In contrast, **winter visitors** (again probably including birds stopping in Menorca only briefly before heading still further south) were in abundance. Blackbirds, song thrushes, blackcaps and robins were everywhere where there was cover, and the thrushes at least were also often moving overhead at dawn, in significant numbers on some days. Later, on some days, there were flocks of starlings moving around, typically groups of 50-100, but a larger congregation of around a thousand appeared at Son Bou, and at the same site a single bluethroat showed well, if fleetingly.

Most wetland birds on the island are winter visitors, and one site (Es Grau) held very significant numbers: maybe 1500 coot, 100 mallard, little grebe, pochard and little egrets, and smaller numbers of great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, wigeon, shoveler, gadwall, moorhen, greenshank, little ringed plover and best of all two great white egrets and two red-crested pochards. A surprising number of some of these, including 75 little egrets (with one great white) and nine greenshanks, were on and around the first, shallow lagoon, nearest the road, oblivious to passing pedestrians.

In contrast, the nearby Mongofre Nou (a.k.a. Addaia lagoons) was almost deserted, for no apparent reason: just single greenshank and common sandpiper, a few mallards, six cormorants, two grey herons and not one coot! Likewise, Tirant was completely unproductive, apart from a green sandpiper, but that was less surprising given that it is described as a 'seasonal wetland' and the dry season meant it wasn't at all wet, despite the rain of the previous week. And sadly, the previously interesting wetlands at the bottom of Algendar Gorge had recently been destroyed by drainage works, and subsequent conversion to agricultural use: we were very happy to discover that the upper reaches of the Algendar Gorge make a wonderful replacement in the itinerary, with tranquil woods, a tumbling river, and rocky gorge walls.

Water was of course guaranteed at Es Mercadal *depuradora* (water purification plant), and it held 28 cattle egrets, one wood and two common sandpipers, while the visible wet patches at the back of Son Bou produced 30 cattle and a couple of little egrets, with a few mallard and coots. Indeed flocks of cattle egrets, which are often scarce or absent on our spring trips, were seen in several other, non-wetland places, associating with livestock.

In addition to the species already mentioned, there were other **signs of migration** through and over the island, in spite of the very settled weather. Hirundines (of three species) were moving south constantly during the first half of the week, as were yellow wagtails (subspecies undetermined as they were overhead), though numbers almost petered out later on. A few white wagtails passed over, but the most frequent wagtail was grey, with singletons seen and heard in many spots on every day. Redstarts appeared in large numbers during the final two days, and other Africa-bound migrants included a few whinchats, wrynecks, goldcrests, tree pipits, willow warblers, spotted flycatchers and single pied flycatcher and melodious warbler. A presumed migrant sparrowhawk flew through, harrying the goldfinch flocks, but no hoped-for and half-expected Eleonora's falcons or hobbies.

FULL BIRD LIST

Key to sites

AG Algendar Gorge	B Binidali	CC Cales Coves
CdC Cap de Cavallería	CF Cap Favàritx	CG Cala Galdana
EG s'Albufera Es Grau	EM Es Mercadal	F Fornells
M Mahón	MG Matchani Gran	MN Montgofre Nou/Addaia
MT Monte Toro	NT Naveta d'es Tudons	SB Son Bou
SR Sa Roca	T Tirant	TG Torre d'en Gaumes

Little Grebe	c100 EG; 2 SB
Great Crested Grebe	c10 EG
Cormorant	6 MN; 5 EG
Mediterranean Shag	Small numbers on all rocky coasts.
Cattle Egret	28 EM <i>depuradora</i> ; 30 SB; scattered smaller flocks elsewhere.
Little Egret	c100 EG; 2 SB
Great White Egret	2 EG
Grey Heron	5 EG; 2 MN; 1 SB
Wigeon	2 EG
Gadwall	c20 EG
Mallard	c100 EG; 10 MN; c30 SB
Shoveler	c30 EG
Pochard	c100 EG
Red-crested Pochard	2 EG
Red Kite	Singles and pairs scattered across the island.
Egyptian Vulture	Small numbers scattered throughout, with 3 over SB.
Sparrowhawk	1 near MG.
Booted Eagle	The commonest large raptor, seen all over; maximum 5 at SB.
Osprey	Singles at SR and EG.
Kestrel	Odd birds across the island.
Peregrine	Pairs over MG, M, CdC; 1 on cliffs at CG.
Red-legged Partridge	Pairs at MG and behind TG.

Moorhen	c30 EG; 4 SB
Coot	c1500 EG; c20 SB
Stone-curlew	Seen or heard daily at MG; also heard CdC and behind TG.
Little Ringed Plover	1 EG
Common Sandpiper	Singles at B, EG, MN; 2 EM <i>depuradora</i> .
Wood Sandpiper	1 EM <i>depuradora</i> .
Green Sandpiper	1 T
Greenshank	9 EG; 1 MN
Audouin's Gull	2 SB; 1 CdC; 5 M
Yellow-legged Gull	Common around the coast and wetlands.
Woodpigeon	Occasional birds in AG, SR.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Feral Pigeons in every town; wild-type Rock Doves MN, F.
Turtle Dove	Ones and twos widely scattered, mostly appearing to be on active migration.
Collared Dove	Common in towns and villages.
Scops Owl	1 MG
Hoopoe	1 MG
Wryneck	Singles at MG, TG, SB.
Short-toed Lark	MG and CdC, including singing birds.
Thekla Lark	Frequent throughout in open habitats.
Swallow	Strong southerly passage, especially early in the week.
House Martin	Good numbers moving with Swallows.
Sand Martin	A few birds mixed with other hirundines.
Tree Pipit	Single fly-overs on most days.
Tawny Pipit	1 CdC
Meadow Pipit	1 MN
White Wagtail	M, EG
Grey Wagtail	Small numbers of fly-overs on every day.
Yellow Wagtail	Groups of up to 6 flying over, especially early in the week.
Robin	Very numerous in scrub and woodland, especially at SR and AG.
Bluethroat	1 SB
Nightingale	Occasional through the week, but several birds at MG early one morning.
Redstart	Numerous in scrub and woodland especially later in the week, at MN and CF.
Whinchat	Singles at SB, CC.
Stonechat	Small numbers scattered across the island.
Blue Rock Thrush	B, AG
Blackbird	Common throughout, especially in dense scrub and woodland; major arrival at the end of the week. Some overhead passage.
Song Thrush	Frequent, both in scrub and woodland and flying south overhead in small groups at dawn.
Cetti's Warbler	In song all over the island; seen well at SB and AG.
Melodious Warbler	1 T in tamarisks.
Dartford Warbler	1 B, in song and seen briefly.
Sardinian Warbler	Common throughout.
Zitting Cisticola	2 seen very well in the dunes at SB.
Blackcap	Common in tall scrub and woodland.
Willow Warbler	Occasional birds in scrubby habitats; snatches of sub-song.
Chiffchaff	Frequently seen and heard, with snatches of song, in scrub and woodland.
Goldcrest	Several SR.
Firecrest	1 MG
Spotted Flycatcher	Several birds at MG, in the Wild Wood.
Pied Flycatcher	1 MG
Great Tit	Common in woodland, trees and tall scrub.
Raven	Ones and twos scattered across the island.
Starling	Flocks moving south throughout the week; a large flock of c1500 at SB.
House Sparrow	Common throughout, less closely associated with buildings than during spring visits.
Chaffinch	Fairly common in trees and woodland.
Greenfinch	Fairly common, with some flocks moving south.
Goldfinch	Common in open habitats, in flocks of up to 50 birds.
Linnet	Scattered in most habitats.
Corn Bunting	Common in the lowlands, though little song; flocks of up to 10 birds moving south at dawn.

PLANTS

Following a drought summer, much of the vegetation was browned and shrivelled, and the rains of the previous week were largely too recent to have had much effect. Therefore, there were very few plants in flower, outside of watered gardens. Despite this, a number of interesting plants were found in flower at most sites, and by the end of our trip, the second spring of flowering bulbs was just starting to show.

A full list of all wild plants **in flower** is given below:

<i>Ampelodesmus mauritanicus</i>		
<i>Artemisia caerulescens</i>		Es Grau
<i>Artemisia gallica</i>		Binidali; Fornells
<i>Arundo donax</i>	Giant Reed	
<i>Aster tripolium</i> ssp. <i>pannonicus</i>	Sea Aster	Es Grau
<i>Atriplex portulacoides</i>	Sea-purslane	
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	Large Daisy	
<i>Capparis spinosa</i>	Caper	Binidali
<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>	Rock Samphire	
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Bermuda Grass	Algendar Gorge
<i>Dittrichia graveolens</i>		
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	Stink Aster	
<i>Erica multiflora</i>	Mediterranean Heath	Cala Galdana; Sa Roca
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	
<i>Inula crithmoides</i>	Golden Samphire	
<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Sharp Rush	
<i>Juniperus phoenicea</i>	Phoenician Juniper	
<i>Limonium echioides</i>		
<i>Limonium ferulaceum</i>		Es Grau, Son Bou
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet Alison	
<i>Merendera filifolia</i>		Cales Coves
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>		
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	Sand Daffodil	Son Bou
<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	Pokeweed	Algendar Gorge
<i>Polygonum salicifolium</i>		Algendar Gorge
<i>Reichardia picroides</i>		Fornells; very fleshy coastal form
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> var. <i>palaui</i>	Rosemary	
<i>Salsola soda</i>		Es Grau
<i>Schoenus nigricans</i>	Black Bog-rush	Fornells
<i>Sonchus tenerrimus</i>		
<i>Smilax aspera</i>		
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser Reedmace	
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea Squill	

Given the season, there were also many plants **in fruit**, often attractively so:

<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry-tree	Sa Roca
<i>Asparagus acutifolius</i>		
<i>Carlina corymbosa</i>		
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	Dwarf Fan-palm	Cap de Cavallería
<i>Clematis flammula</i>		Es Grau
<i>Conyza bonariensis</i>		
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	Sea Holly	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	
<i>Juniperus phoenicea</i>	Phoenician Juniper	
<i>Lonicera implexa</i>		
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	Sand Daffodil	Son Bou
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>		
<i>Phillyrea latifolia</i>		
<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	Pokeweed	Algendar Gorge
<i>Pistachia lentiscus</i>		
<i>Punica granatum</i>	Pomegranate	
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm Oak	
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Mediterranean Buckthorn	
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	Wild Madder	
<i>Smilax aspera</i>		
<i>Solanum sodomaeum</i>	Apple-of-Sodom	

In addition to the above, the following **plants of interest** were also noted:

<i>Arthrocnemum macrostachyum</i>		
<i>Asparagus horridus</i>		
<i>Asplenium sagittata</i>		Algendar Gorge
<i>Astragalus balearicus</i>		
<i>Dorycnium fulgurans</i>		
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	Great Horsetail	
<i>Launaea cervicornis</i>	Hedgehog Lettuce	
<i>Limonium minutum</i>		
<i>Posidonia oceanica</i>	Neptune-weed	
<i>Salicornia ramossisimum</i>	Glasswort	Es Grau
<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i> ssp. <i>magonica</i>		
<i>Sarcocornia fruticosa</i>	Shrubby Glasswort	
<i>Sarcocornia perennis</i>	Perennial Glasswort	
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Small-leaved Elm	Algendar Gorge

No attempt was made to list all the plants flowering **in gardens**, but the following species were especially notable and several proved very attractive to insects:

Aptenia cordifolia

Bougainvillea spectabilis

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis

Ipomoea indica

Jacaranda ovalifolia

Lantana camara

Phytolacca arborea

Plumbago auriculata

Tecomaria capensis

FUNGI

An impressive bracket fungus on Matchani Gran was provisionally identified as the parasitic *Fomitopsis pinicola*.

BUGS AND BEASTIES

One of the most exciting features of our week was the sheer abundance and diversity of large invertebrates. By day, they were everywhere, but in addition the lights of Matchani Gran provided an irresistible lure to a wide range of moths – many more species than listed here remain unidentified – and other species such as mole-cricket, field cricket, rhinoceros beetle, large churchyard beetle, mantises *etc.* The cats at Matchani Gran also brought us many ‘presents’ as we enjoyed the calm, warm evenings on the veranda!

The moths were an interesting bunch, a mix of familiar resident British species (eg lime-speck pug, shuttle-shaped dart), common or regular migrants to Britain (eg silver Y, vestal, rush veneer), very rare migrants (eg Portland ribbon wave, beautiful marbled) and some which have not (yet?) been recorded from our shores.



Left to right: *Zebeeba falsalis*, Small Mediterranean Emerald, Beautiful Marbled, Vestal (on an ivy leaf).

Given that the summer drought meant that there were rather few plants in flower in semi-natural habitats across the island, garden and cultivated flowers were a particular focus of insect activity by day. *Lantana camara*, *Bougainvillea spectabilis* and *Aptenia cordifolia* in particular were often buzzing, as were the natural nectar sources of flowering Ivy, in both gardens and gorges.

We also discovered that the pool at Matchani Gran is a magnet for day-flying insects, especially wasps, flies and bugs: while this makes the prospect of actually swimming distinctly unappealing, it would keep the avid entomologist happy for hours, without having to kill anything themselves!

LEPIDOPTERA

Butterflies

Swallowtail Large White Small White Clouded Yellow Brimstone	There is some doubt about the status of Brimstone on Menorca (due to confusion with Cleopatra), but I am convinced that several we saw (notably at Sa Roca and the Algendar Gorge) were truly Brimstones. There were several other strong contenders as well elsewhere.
Cleopatra Wall Meadow Brown Speckled Wood Red Admiral Painted Lady Two-tailed Pasha	Very abundant. South-western form <i>aegeria</i> . Sa Roca; it may be worth baiting the area with rotting fruit on future trips to try and entice them to hang around.
Lang's Short-tailed Blue Long-tailed Blue Geranium Bronze Common Blue Holly Blue	Sa Roca

Macromoths

Vestal Lime-speck Pug Small Mediterranean Emerald Portland Ribbon Wave Small Blood-vein Small Dusty Wave Coppery Taupe Red-green Carpet Striped Twin-spot Carpet ?Mediterranean Lace Border Shaded Beauty Holm Oak Beauty Willow Beauty Scalloped Barred Yellow Belle Hummingbird Hawk-moth Spurge Hawk-moth Pygmy Footman Shuttle-shaped Dart <i>Cryphia ochsi</i> Scarce Bordered Straw Dark Spectacle Silver Y Small Mottled Willow Beautiful Marbled <i>Zebeeba falsalis</i> Porter's Rustic Sombre Brocade <i>Eutelia adulatrix</i> <i>Ophiusa tirhaca</i>	Common by day and night all over the island. One of the commonest species at lights. <i>Charissa (Euchrognophos) mucidaria</i> <i>Peribatodes umbraria</i> – a Holm Oak feeder. <i>Peribatodes illicaria</i> – another Holm Oak feeder. <i>Gerinia honoraria</i> – yet another Holm Oak feeder. Seen all over the island; about 20 around one bed of <i>Lantana camara</i> in Es Mercadal. Caterpillars at Es Grau (on <i>Euphorbia dendroides</i>) & Naveta d'es Tudons. Very common at lights at Matchani Gran. St Climent Very few, by day. An <i>Asparagus</i> feeder. St Climent; a <i>Pistachia</i> feeder. Sa Roca
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Micromoths

<i>Endotricha flammealis</i> Rush Veneer Rusty-dot Pearl Meal Moth <i>Agdistis</i> sp. <i>Palpita vitrealis</i> <i>Oegoconia cf caradjai</i>	Including a plain form (maybe this species) associated with <i>Arbutus</i> at Sa Roca. Including several examples with strong costal blotch. Other plume moths were seen at light.
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OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Dragonflies & Damselflies

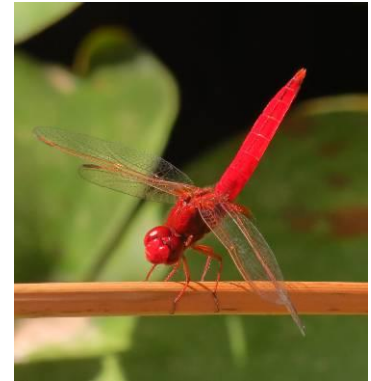
Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>	Widespread; common at Son Bou.
Southern Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna affinis</i>	
Scarlet Darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	Around Matchani Gran garden pond; also Son Bou and Es Grau.
Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>	Algendar Gorge
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	
Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombei</i>	Widespread.
Western Willow Emerald	<i>Lestes viridis</i>	
Mediterranean Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis</i>	
Small Red Damselfly	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>	Son Bou
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	
Winter Damselfly	<i>Sympecma fusca</i>	Sa Roca



Winter Damselfly



Mediterranean Demoiselle



Scarlet Darter

Grasshoppers & Crickets

Egyptian Locust	<i>Anacridium aegyptiacum</i>	
Migratory Locust	<i>Locusta migratoria</i>	
Red-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda miniata</i>	
	<i>Calliptamus barbarus</i>	
Rattling Grasshopper	<i>Psophos stridulus</i>	Cap de Cavalleria, their rattling flight (and red hind wings) very obvious on the sparsely vegetated slopes.
Sickle-bearing Bush-cricket	<i>Phaneroptera nana</i>	Sa Roca
Tree-cricket	<i>Oecanthus pellucens</i>	Vocal some nights.
Mole-cricket	<i>Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa</i>	Very vocal every night; one came to light.
Field Cricket	<i>Gryllus bimaculatus</i>	

Mantises

Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>	Green and brown forms
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True Bugs

<i>Carpocoris mediterraneus</i>	A brown shield-bug	
<i>Nezara viridula</i>	Southern Green Shield-bug	Monte Toro
<i>Spilostethus pandurus</i>	A red-and-black ground bug	
<i>Spilostethus saxatilis</i>	Another red-and-black ground bug	
<i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>	Fire-bug	
cf. <i>Spathocera</i> sp.	A squash-bug	

Beetles

<i>Coniocleonus nebulosus</i>	A big weevil with chevrons	
<i>Akis bacarozzo</i>	A large, black, flattened beetle	
<i>Scarabaeus laticollis</i>	A dung beetle	
<i>Timarcha balearica</i>	Balearic Bloody-nosed Beetle	
<i>Blaps lusitanica</i>	Churchyard Beetle	
<i>Blaps gigas</i>	Large Churchyard Beetle	
<i>Brachycerus</i> cf. <i>muricatus</i>	A large wrinkly weevil	Torre d'en Gaumes
<i>Crioceris</i> sp.	Close to Asparagus Beetle	
<i>Chrysolina herbacea</i>	A metallic chrysomelid beetle	Algendar Gorge
<i>Pimelia cribra</i>	A darkling beetle	
<i>Copris hispanicus</i>	Rhinoceros Beetle	
<i>Ocypus olens</i>	Devil's Coach-horse	Upper Algendar Gorge
<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	7-spot Ladybird	

Flies		
<i>Clogmia albipunctata</i>	An owl-midge	
Bees & Wasps		
<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	Violet Carpenter-bee	
<i>Sceliphron spirifex</i>	Thread-waisted Wasp	
<i>Polistes gallicus</i>	Paper Wasp	Adult at nest
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honeybee	
<i>Eumenes</i> sp.	A potter wasp	Nests
<i>Colletes</i> sp.		
Others		
<i>Tegeneria gigantea</i>	Large House Spider	
<i>Araneus diadematus</i>	An orb-web Spider	
<i>Cyrtophora citricola</i>	A colonial orb-web spider	
<i>Tachypodiulus</i> sp.	A millipede	
<i>Monodonta turbinata</i>	Large Top-shell	
<i>Cerithium vulgatum</i>	An elongate, sculptured sea shell	



Stripeless Tree Frog



Chrysolina herbacea



Praying Mantis

MAMMALS, REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS, FISH

Being a small island, Menorca is not renowned for its range of vertebrates other than birds. A full list of those we recorded is given below. The Matchani Gran tortoises provided one of the highlights of the trip, especially on the final day when we came across two doing what male and female tortoises do, very loudly. The knocking of the shells was audible from a considerable distance, and on closer approach, the knocks were interspersed with plaintive sighs, though whether this was a sign of exertion on the part of the male, or passion from the female, we could not ascertain!

Mammals	
Black Rat	Road and cat casualties; also abundant signs under pine trees of cones nibbled squirrel-fashion.
Rabbit	Droppings noted in several places.
Pine Marten	Road casualty near Santa Galdana.
Weasel	Matchani Gran
European Free-tailed Bat	Matchani Gran
Serotine	Matchani Gran
Long-fingered Bat	Matchani Gran, seen picking insects off the swimming pool.
Reptiles	
Hermann's Tortoise	Matchani Gran (at least 5 different individuals recorded); Es Grau (two, plus one hatchling); behind Torre d'en Gaumes.
European Pond Terrapin	Hatchling at Son Bou on dry land.
Italian Wall Lizard	Widespread.
Moorish Gecko	Torre d'en Gaumes, in the cisterns.
Turkish Gecko	Matchani Gran
Amphibians and fish	
Green Toad	Matchani Gran, feeding on moths at lights.
Stripeless Tree Frog	Matchani Gran, by the garden pond; heard in many other places.
Iberian Water Frog	Algendar Gorge
Grey Mullet	Algendar Gorge

ARCHAEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND OTHER 'WIDER INTEREST' SITES

As well as exploring the delights of the autumn wildlife of Menorca, we took the opportunity to visit a number of archaeological, cultural and other sites, any or all (and more) of which could usefully be visited on future trips, according to the spread of interests and perhaps to take refuge from extremes of weather, whether hot sun or heavy rain!

Archaeological sites:

Torre d'en Gaumes and **Naveta d'es Tudons** are old favourites from previous trips; Torre d'en Gaumes in particular repaid a fuller exploration than in the past, without the diversions of birds flying overhead. It also produced several good insect sightings (eg the large, wrinkly weevil *Brachycerus muricatus*) and a population of Moorish Geckos within some of the cisterns in the lower part of the site. Likewise, the surrounds of the Naveta were very good for grasshoppers and other insects.

We also visited one of the nearer sites to home, **So na Caçana**, by the road from Cala en Porter to Alaior. A relatively small site, which seems to be privately owned, it has not suffered the effects of 'tidying up' as much as the more famous sites. And the structures are pretty impressive.

Historical sites and churches:

The tower at **Fornells** is an impressive defensive construction (built during one of the British occupations), and was worth a few minutes' exploration, especially for the tremendous view at the top.

We looked into the church briefly but found little there to detain us. But that was not the case in **Ciutadella** – the cathedral was simply magnificent, with a great sense of light and space, and some of the most exciting modern stained glass we have ever seen. Then after that, the Bishop's Garden next door was an oasis of shade and calm in the heart of the city.



Ciutadella cathedral and detail of some of the stained glass.

St Climent Church was pleasant, if a little dilapidated, and as the white front wall is floodlit, it provided another opportunity to search for moths at night, after leaving the Casino restaurant. In some ways, its simplicity made it more attractive than the **monastery at Monte Toro**, full of holy bling, though the view from El Toro was of course magnificent, especially once the coach-loads of cruise-liner passengers had departed.

But even the opulence of Monte Toro monastery paled when compared with the **church of Santa Maria in Mahon**. The largest church on the island, this has a vast interior space, and the effect of the decoration (albeit again showing some signs of decay) on entering was quite shocking. There is also a huge organ, which is played during daily lunchtime recitals: this might have been one for a rainy day if we had had any!

Of course, **Mahon** as a whole has a magnificently **historic centre and port**, which we were taken around by boat, with multilingual commentary, for the true 'visitor experience'.

Visitor Centres and exhibitions:

The **Ecomuseum at Cap de Cavalleria** had an interesting exhibition on ecology, archaeology and history (not in English, though an English translation of the displays and exhibits was provided). In particular, the historical element helped to explain the site under active excavation and investigation just below the Museum/Café. And it was also of interest to see another Honeyguide leader (Rachel Hamilton) featured on one of the displays!

At **Es Grau**, there is a relatively new **visitor centre**, signposted left off the approach road to Es Grau village, part of the aborted Shangri-la development. While its displays were rather sparse, the toilets were good, and the staff very helpful, providing printouts of the most recent wetland bird surveys, and directing us to the new hides and walks on the south shore of the lagoon. And outside the centre is a garden with (labelled) examples of many of the special plants of Menorca and the Balearics, including several *Euphorbia dendroides* plants. We actually walked past these plants three times before Judith spotted a spurge hawk-moth caterpillar crossing the path; despite the large size and spectacular colouration, they proved to be remarkably well camouflaged even on a spurge which they had completely defoliated. Close investigation revealed between 50 and 60 on just two or three plants!

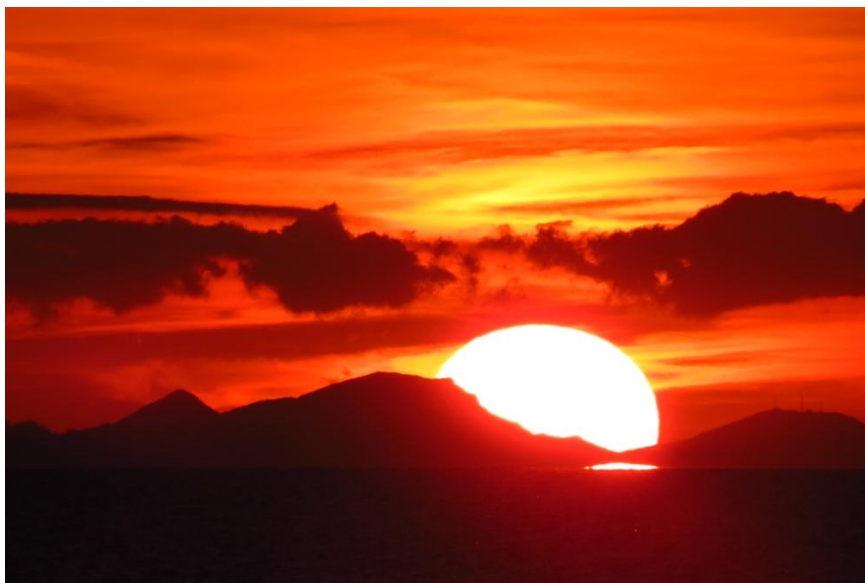
A newly-built theatre/municipal hall in the centre of **Es Mercadal** (close to the main car park and windmill) had an exhibition of photos in its lobby, representing a virtual tour of the island, its landscapes and wildlife, around the Cami de Cavalls. Definitely worth a few minutes' stop, both for the exhibition but also for the huge number of hummingbird hawk-moths feeding on a bed of *Lantana* outside the hall.

Others:

We took the opportunity to investigate two of the ancient routes of the island. The **Cami d'en Kane**, a British-built route almost parallel to the main road Me1, took us on a gentle drive through the hidden heart of the island, very scenic, although with no apparent wildlife features we didn't find elsewhere.

Although relatively new in its current form, the **Cami de Cavalls** is apparently based upon a 14th Century round-island route which was used for defensive purposes. And given that we spent most of our time by the coast, we encountered it at several different points. It provided access to some more out-of-the-way sites (eg Addaia lagoons, and our grand finale, the delightful inlet of Cales Coves), and is a good, safe and generally easy way of exploring.

A final mention must go to the golden sunset we saw on our first day, just a few minutes' drive from Matchani Gran: the sight from the coast road at Binisafúller of the **sun setting over the dramatic Mallorcan mountains** (pictured below) was pure Menorcan magic!



Front cover photos:

Top row: Thekla Lark, Long-tailed blue, *Narcissus serotinus*.

Middle row: Spurge Hawk-moth caterpillars, autumn scene, *Chrysolina herbacea*.

Bottom row: Cattle Egrets, fruiting strawberry-tree, Green Toad.
