

THE FANTASTIC PLASTICS OF EUROPE



7/7 2009 – 27/7 2009

By: Stefan Magnusson

BACKGROUND

Scheduling a vacation together with my girlfriend, Ulrika. Started talking roughly about driving through Spain for a week or two. For some time I have had ideas of driving a crazy route through Europe to try to fill in some gaps in my Netfugl WP-ticklist. This would primarily mean locating escaped/released cage species that have established self-sustaining populations. So called “Category-C species”.

Not because I like them particularly much, but because previous trips have included most other A-species in this region. When Ulrika start sniffing about “Spain”, I already have it all planned.

We scheduled the route to include Holland, which hold a bunch of unique Cat-C species. At time of planning a green heron was present in Amsterdam as well as baillon’s crake NW of Utrecht. Driving through Paris we both felt we wanted to spend a day visiting attractions. Passing the Pyrenees and the small village of Laroin for red-billed leiothrix. We planned to spend a mini-vacation in wonderful nationalpark Monfrague, Extremadura, Spain. One or two days in Portugal for 4 Cat-C species around Lisabon, but also the long-staying Rüppell’s vulture near the small village of Vila Velha do Rodao. Two Spanish species in the south: Western Olivaceous warbler and lesser flamingo, which had been missed on previous trips to Spain. Visiting Gibraltar. Re-routing through the French Riviera and the island of Porquerolles (Reeve’s pheasant) and two sites near Nice for two species of lovebirds. Four Cat-C species around Milan and then a mini-vacation in nationalpark Hohe Tauern in Matri, Austria. Driving through Germany, two stops for some escaped parrots in Stuttgart and Wiesbaden.

For this we scheduled 3 weeks. 10000 km’s of driving and approximately 4500 EUR for two persons, wanting “luxury enough” to call this a vacation, but still keep the costs down (in this excluding costs for wear of the car).



Google Earth-extract of the sites (and the route driven to visit them)

This being primarily a vacation-trip. Attempt on any single species had to be called off after some time's searching, not to destroy our planning of other things. This also meant we missed out on several "easy" species. Even without trying to keep a good list, about 220 species were bumped into during the trip.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would feel wrong to put these acknowledgements last in this report. There is not tonnes written around the escaped species of Europe and new information sort of "leak out" through word of mouth.

Want to pay a special thank Olof Jönsson for lumping over all information he has gathered around Cat-C in Europe. Richard Ek for his article regarding Cat-C species in latest Swedish Club300 magazine (Roadrunner). Other friends providing valuable tips after their visits on some of the sites: Arne Holgersson, Jesper Segergren, Björn Ander. In particular all people I have thrown questions at regarding sites and species. Good reports on Internet. It is amazing how much time other birdwatchers have put in to try to help me on my trip (copying articles, directing questions to friends, handing over GPS-coordinates, maps and descriptions to sites).

Not least my dear girlfriend for her unique patience during this trip. Allowing me to reschedule our trip for a second try on Rüppell's vulture without question (even though this added an extra 350 km's on our trip meter). Standing all the flies and mosquitoes at the Malpensa Airport site, driving us towards the edge (all the three visits...). Getting up in the middle of the night, some mornings, only to arrive at sites at "best time". Trying to understand the complete chaos in my head when bar-headed goose was so hard to find in Holland.

DAY TO DAY JOURNAL

7 July



SWEDEN



DENMARK



GERMANY



NETHERLANDS

Off for a good start. Leaving work at 13.00 a few hours earlier than anticipated. Welcome vacation! Picking up Ulrika and we are on our way. Setting aim for Groningen (NL) an approximate 650 km drive. Arriving at about 23.00 in the evening. Planning to start birding early in the morning and

planning a night in the car. Just some drive-by birds. Lesser black-backed gulls en masse on the fields in northern Netherlands. A long-eared owl before midnight.



Common Gull (Ferry to Puttgarten)

8 July



NETHERLANDS

The car did not offer a lot of sleep. Daylight appears around 05.00 and the first site is Lauwersmeer N of Groeningen. A wetland with sandbanks and bays offering good shelter for wetland birds. This really is a great site, not only for the Chilean flamingos supposed to be here. Spotted crane calling before dawn. A male Montagu's harrier. A peregrine. Great amounts of spoonbills (=why does not more spill over the sea to Sweden?). A few ruddy ducks. +50 Egyptian geese. Bluethroats. Black-tailed godwits. Great white egrets (2). Black terns. To mention some.

I manage to find 2 flamingos early in the morning, when it is still too dark. 2 Chilean flamingos were reported the previous days. Sadly no characters are visible and when returning an hour later the birds are gone. Gone is also the black swan reported earlier.

Most surprising is actually the lone (tundra)bean-goose.



Bluethroat (juvenile)

Next stop to try to catch up with the Chilean flamingo is Steile Bank, where a dozen of these birds have been seen the last weeks and also another escaped flamingo species: American flamingo. I only manage to find a bunch of cormorants on the reef. Possibly the water levels are high (not much of a reef left) so I search for the flamingos starting a few km's W along the shore. Here we bump into 5 black swans. Yardang! Continuing on the E side of Steile bank and after a few stops find a blur of pink birds. Darker pink than greater flamingo, having more black on bill and (important) gray legs with pink knees. Chilean flamingos! Not far left from the group the single mentioned American flamingo is also found. It is pink to almost reddish and with completely pink legs and much black on the bill. It is now raining heavily and the wind is quite strong. I am seriously worried my drained camera will not survive the docu-shots of the Chilean flamingos.



Black swan



Chilean flamingos

9 July



NETHERLANDS



BELGIUM



FRANCE

Early morning at Hogedijk, north of Noorden. Baillon's crake have been visible here for the last 1,5 months, but today it is not to be found. Neither do we find the Bar-headed goose seen a day earlier. Black-terns, Black-tailed godwits and Ruffs do not quite make up for it.



Black-tailed godwit

A bit frustrated we move on towards Blauwkapel, near Utrecht where a pair of Bar-headed geese have been reported in a small pond for a long time. We stroll around for a time, but no geese are to be found.

Even more frustrated we drive towards Heulse Waard where Bar-headed goose should be a penalty-kick. Some 57 individuals reported in end April and after that regularly 8-12 birds. We spend a good two hours in the area scanning the fields kilometers W and E of the parking. They just do not exist! I start getting really frustrated and spinning my bin's all over the place in pure agony. Finally a group of 8 pale silvery geese are located by the purest of luck a few kilometers away.

What a relief not to start out missing a species like this...!



Bar-headed goose

Initial plans were to locate snow goose in Holland. But as time was getting short for us to drive the 500 km's to Senlis (N Paris) and there seems to be some discussions over snow goose as a Kat-C species in Holland, we decided to leave Holland.

Arrive in the evening at Ibis hotel in Senlis.

10 July



Drive the 10 km's to Chantilly where we grab a train to Garde du Nord in Paris. Spend the whole day walking around the attractions in Paris until our feet are bleeding.

11 July



Start driving towards Pyrenees at 04.00. The GPS suggests an arrival at Pau around 13.30. Traffic is really bad some stretches. Actual arrival is not until 18.00 (after only two short breaks). We soon find the parking spot in Laroin. This is a site for red-billed leiothrix. Walk into the woodland and immediately hear some strange calls. After a few minutes a few red-billed leiothrix's are located in the low bushes. Actually a really nice bird! About 50+ black kites and the first short-toed treecreeper.



Red-billed leiothrix

Driving back the coast towards Bayonne we find ourselves almost alone on the highways and compared to the situation earlier it is a real pleasure driving. At 22.00 we decide to try to drive a few hours towards Spain before taking shelter for the night. The only cirl bunting of the trip at a gas-station.

12 July



SPAIN

At 09.00 we find ourselves having driven the whole distance to our hotel Hospederia Park Monfrague N Trujillo (inside Monfrague national park). Not far from the Portuguese border. 1700 km's covered in 29 hours.

Have a breakfast at the Vulture-cliff (by the Castillo). Griffon-vultures, peregrines, bee-eaters, red-rumped swallows, cliff-swallows, black kites, black vultures, egyptian vulture, azure-winged magpies. This is just heaven! The first eagle... An adult spanish imperial eagle! (A few years ago I spent two hardcore days searching for this species with Arne Holgersson at Monfrague – without finding it – and now I only have to spend five minutes of soft birding carrying a ham-baguette in my right hand).

Birding can be odd sometimes.

Embark the Castillo for some close-ups with the vultures. Again: 5 minutes of “loose” birding and two white-rumped swifts pass by (again: took me and Arne two long visits the previous trip)! Wonderful views of the raptors. Short-toed eagle, booted eagle etc.

A great start and a victory for soft-core birding!



Spanish imperial eagle



White-rumped swift



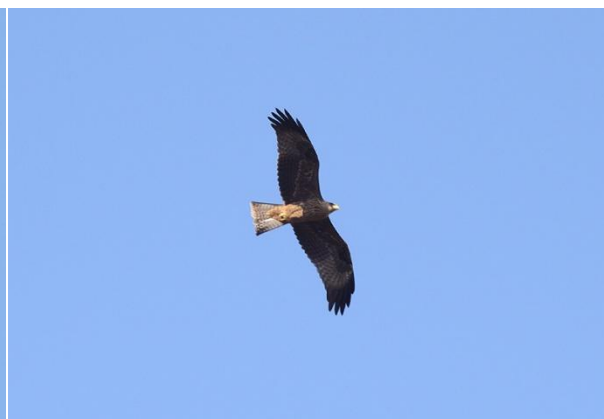
Short-toed eagle



Booted eagle



Egyptian vulture



Black kite (juvenile)



Griffon Vulture



Black Vulture

13 July



SPAIN

Heavy-snoozing. Rumble up at around 10.00 just in time before serving of breakfast ends. Some time relaxing at the pool. Driving around Monfrague. Not much new from yesterday, birdwise. A breeding golden oriole, dartford warbler, long-tailed tit.

14 July



SPAIN

Visit a steppe-area near Caceres (Caceres plains) in the morning. There is a heavy strong wind and it is surprisingly cold. We only spend about one and a half hour in the area before breakfast. A red-necked nightjar before daylight. Scan loosely for bustards and sandgrouse, but the weather is challenging. Manage to find a few new larks for the trip: calandra lark, thekla lark and short-toed lark. Black stork, lesser kestrel, montagu's harrier. Booted eagle on the way home.

Spend a few hours at the Castillo but it is quite slow apart from two white-rumped swifts spending half a minute before disappearing (=this seems to be the pattern of the site).

15 July



SPAIN



PORTUGAL

Check out from our mini-vacation at Extremadura and set aim for Portugal. A short road stop at a crossing over Rio Tajo where 2 blue rock-thrushes are present and a golden oriole. A few booted eagles and short-toed eagle as well as a bit displaced black vulture. Cross the border to Portugal and are quite amazed by the density of azure-winged magpie along the roads. At least 80 birds in small groups are seen the first 10 kilometres.



Black kite (adult)

Our first goal is the Griffon-vulture colony at Vila Velha do Rodao approx 200 km NE of Lisbon. This is the site where a single adult Rüppell's vulture has been seen the last 6 years. The bird is a bit tricky since it strays away and can be absent for some times. Still, plenty of observations have been made recently.

We spend a few hours scanning the cliffs and watching the vultures passing by, but the only vultures are the griffons and two egyptian vultures . A black stork. Sardinian warbler but not much else. The surroundings are astonishing, but it does not make up for the lost bird.

Not much to do. Drive the 200 km's towards Carcavelos E of Lisbon. The site for crested myna is overcrowded with sun-bathing tourists. In addition a military fort is located just by where the birds seem to forage. It's simply not the ideal place for my 500 mm lens.

Manage to get an observation from the motorway, an additional when parking the car and another distant observation when just out of the car permitting a snapshot-documentation and we soon decide to head on towards better grounds.



Crested myna



Pallid swift

Spend the night at a camping-site south of Lisabon.

16 July



PORTUGAL

To my frustration we are locked-in at the campingsite until 8.00 AM. Feel like an animal in a cage deprived of all my freedom. At 8.00 (sharp!) we drive out from the main gate and set aim for Barroca d'Alva. Stop at the obvious bridge at the overgrown ditch and start scanning for all sorts of escapes.

Star of the show, without question, is the male Yellow-crowned bishop which is performing a remarkable display-flight, "fluffing" all feathers and with slo-mo flight hovering like a giant bumble-bee over the reeds. Probably 15 displaying males along the ditch.



Yellow-crowned bishop (male)

Black-headed weaver is the next announcement. But this one is sadly boring in comparison. Duller, more discrete and seems shockingly afraid of my camera. The female with a piercing sharp look I have only before seen in my old german-language teacher.



Blackheaded weaver (male)



Blackheaded weaver (female)

Other good stuff: waxbills, alpine swifts, glossy ibis, spoonbills, purple heron, black-winged stilts, little egrets, cattle egrets, white storks, montagu's harriers. To mention some. A bit of a surprise is a "blue-phase" little egret. "Jonsson" talk about a rare blue form existing. Some birds are sometimes referred to as supposed hybrids with western-reef egret. The tarsus held the pattern of little. The bill was thin and seemingly straight.



Little egret (X Reef heron?)

Next stop is the site at the old farms where black-headed munia is seen from time to time. We fail in locating the birds at our first stop. A 10 waxbills around. More alpine swifts – I just love this species. Have a rip-off fish lunch and return to the site for a second try. But, with a bit disappointment, still no luck on the munias.

Manage to renegotiate a new attempt at the rüppell's vulture (some 200 km's completely off route, adding 350 km to the trip...). Arrive at Vila Velha do Rodao quite late in the evening only to confirm that the bird is not present at the vulture-cliff.

It has been a tough day.

Drive the kilometers toward the Spanish border and find a nice, new opened, hotel where we spend the night.

17 July



PORTUGAL



SPAIN

A good night's sleep and we feel quite good (even me after the circumstances). Set aim for Gibraltar and the "goal" of our journey. However: prior to that we try out the site (Palacios de villa Franca) south of Sevilla. This little pond has received title to be the "best site in Spain to find Western Olivaceous warbler". Good stuff! We arrive at the site without problem and after a few seconds opening the car a raspy song (reminiscent of reed-warbler) is heard from the 20X20 m area of bushes in the NW corner of the pond. Although calling/singing frequently the birds are remarkably skulky and hard to observe well. Nevertheless: At least 10 birds are present in the area (adults feeding young) and after half an hour we feel satisfied (without investigating the site more thoroughly).



Western olivaceous warbler

We visit Gibraltar and Tarifa and head north towards the village of Fuentepiedra (N Malaga). A large saltwater-pond (3 km's length) at the western outskirts of the village hold an impressive amount of

flamingos (50000 flamingos counted at peak). At mid-summer the pond dries out and the flamingos disperse. This is the site where a small nuclear of lesser flamingos have been present the last few years.

At arrival, late evening, I am surprised to find that the pond is not completely dried out. Still a 1500 adult flamingos are present and also a bunch of the young from this year's breeding. About 50% of the adults are quite close and I search the group with re-borne hopes for lesser flamingo (I was quite sure the pond was to be completely dried out). No lesser flamingo to be found, but I lay my hope to the distant 50% that we intend to walk through tomorrow morning. We are pleased to find a lone white-headed duck, two broad-billed terns, black-winged stilt, montagu's harrier, stone curlew in the area.

Manage to find a hotel in the vicinity.

18 July



SPAIN

Early morning at Fuentepiedra. Still some hopes on the "distant group of flamingo's", to find a lesser flamingo.

Well, soon into different thoughts. In the first light of the morning I find only CHAOS over the lagoon. About 150 Spaniards chasing young flamingos. Falling. Catching. Missing. Carrying. Quite fun sight, if you ask me. But not a good situation to try to dissect flamingos.

Once a year all young flamingos are ringed in a collective action where a lot of volunteers participate.

It's just my luck to pick this day for scanning the flamingos.

Instead we set aim NE. We drive a 1100 km's this day and end up in the evening in Girona, N Barcelona, where we spend the night. In my head I start to plan a re-visit earlier next spring for munia, rüppell's vulture and lesser flamingo (and perhaps some of the other possible future C-stuff in Portugal...)

19 July



SPAIN



FRANCE

Soon reach the French Riviera. Our goal is Hotell Mediterrane in Hyeres, just E Toulon. We check in at noon and find our way down the harbor to get out to the island of Porquerolles, via the boat-line "Tour de la Fondue".

This is a site where we intend to search for Reeve's pheasant. The island is outright beautiful. We stray along a path to the "Phare" (lighthouse) towards the woods where these birds are seen. Since it is early afternoon we decide to crash into the woods to try to find the birds. Start walking around the more open parts of the wood but soon realize that the birds probably confine to the cover of the thickest parts (some close to impassable). Find a bunch of newly shredded feathers I guess belongs to reeve's, an impressive tail-streamer, and decide to crash into the thickets closest. Almost immediately a male reeve's silently sneak away into the scrub.

Stay around and stray around for a while but the only other observation is of a small dark chick most probably belonging to this species (I can't say for sure). Probably the last of a group sneaking into cover (too small to be wandering around alone).

Just beware that common pheasants are common on the island (even frequenting the same parts of the woods).



Soo happy!

20 July



Set aim towards Saint Jean Cap Ferrat and Bealieu Sur Meer, two sister-sites for Fischer's- and Masked lovebirds. Located just E of Nice. Bunches of lovebirds present at both sites (the former much better, in my opinion).

Fischer's lovebirds quite straightforward. Masked lovebirds seem to be present in two forms: A diagnostic "blue" form but also a "green" form. A few birds of the latter quite black-headed, but also the whole spectra of clinal birds with very limited black, approaching Fischer's.



Fischer's Lovebird



Masked Lovebird

We enjoy the coastal roads, through the Riviera, towards Italy.

It has been much driving the last three days so we celebrate the arrival at our hotel in Turbigio (Milan), where we have planned to stay for three days – trying out the Italian buffet of Cat-C birds.

21 July



Early rise in the morning. We spend a good time of the best morning trying to locate the site for Northern bobwhite near Malpensa airport (only a 10 minute drive from our hotel). Finally manage to locate where to park and where to enter and finally also the spot where the birds are seen. The day-

heat is really on and persistent flies bugging us to complete madness. Decide to leave the site for later tries (being so close to our hotel).

30 km's drive to the small town of Oldenico where Sacred Ibises can be found, but I am unaware of the exact status in summer. Planning for a long sit here but already when driving towards the town two Sacred Ibises fly over the road – causing me to make an idiot-stop on the highway and rush out with my camera – praising all gods for this “luck”.

Only to find that these birds are everywhere.



Sacred Ibis

On our way back home to the hotel we give the Malpensa-bobwhite-site another try, but fail and negotiate to try out the site early morning next day.

Just for the sake of it drive towards Inarzo and Brabbia Marsh where two species of parrotbills have established surviving populations. Ashy-throated and Vinous-throated parrotbills. These birds are said to be close to impossible in summer when spreading out over the vast reed-area around the marsh. In winter the birds congregate in flocks and are easier to find.

To add to the complexity in summer: the path out to the reeds and the reeds themselves were completely overgrown. These birds will require a new try in winter.

22 July



Very early start at the Malpensa airport Northern bobwhite site. Walk by the pools which hold impressive numbers of night herons (would estimate around 40 birds) and little white egrets. Rattles from sardinian warbler. Green woodpeckers.

I am quite (actually very!) happily surprised to find at least two northern bobwhites calling, albeit very sporadically, the typical “Bob-white” call. Also hear a bunch of other calls I cannot place.

We had plans to stay in Turbigo another night but, because of the recent success, we decide to move on towards Austria instead.



“Italian” house-sparrow

I manage to re-route the GPS to include Switzerland and Lichtenstein. Ulrika having problems understanding the meaning of it and my claims of “always having dreamt of visiting Lichtenstein” does not impress her.

At the border we are immediately forced to pay a 30 EUR for a swiss Autopass. I try to smile at Ulrika telling that it is very good because it is valid in the ENTIRE Switzerland. However, the route through Switzerland is absolutely amazing. The mountains and the small alp-villages. Suddenly the driving is enjoyable again.

We have a wonderful dinner at McDonalds in Vaduz, Lichtenstein. We also see two house-sparrows in Lichtenstein. But it took some searching. We check in at Ibis hotel in Innsbruck and have a very nice evening strolling around the monumentally old buildings in the genuine Austrian atmosphere.

The wiener-schnitzel is just superb. As is the local brew.

23 July



Spend the morning shopping in Innsbruck at noon take off the approximate two hours to Matrei in Nationalpark Hohe Tauern, where we have booked the next three nights. Arrive just at earliest check-in hour and shortly thereafter share a bottle of wine, a few Jägermeister and a few soothing glasses of Bailey's to some rerun of American Idol on TV. Simon is at his best. A three-course dinner sharing another bottle of wine and ending up in the Piano-bar with a few late drinks.

KNOCK-OUT.

24 July



I feel tired.

Open up the balcony and listens to the birds singing and calling outside: black redstart, bonelli's warbler, coal tit, crested tit, common crossbill, serin, siskin. This is what has been so nice with this extensive tour:

New voices every morning.



Coal tit (juvenile)



Alpine swift



Bonelli's warbler

We make a lousy attempt locating the ski-station that should take us up on the tops. Apparently it has been shut down since I was last here (some 15 years ago). Instead we take a short walk around town and just do nothing for the rest of the day.

25 July



AUSTRIA

Buy a ski-lift ticket to take us up the mountains. Walk around in the regions of 2500 m for some hours. Not much activity among the birds. A golden eagle, breeding waterpipit, alpine swift, black redstart and bonelli's warbler still feels quite good.

After the walk Ulrika is having some problems with her knee and we (unfortunately) have to cancel the planned alpine walk the next morning where I have received information that rock partridge are seen from time to time. Too bad!

26 July



AUSTRIA



GERMANY

Instead we head off towards Stuttgart immediately after breakfast.

We get seriously caught up in traffic-jams just before Munich and between Munich and Stuttgart and loose almost 4 hours. Enjoy the guys playing football on the jammed Autobahn. German culture. Arrive in Stuttgart at around 17.00 and immediately check in and walk the rough km to the park "Unterer Schlossgarten" along the railwaytrack. Walk around the park for almost two hours without finding any parrots. We also search the connected "Rosensteiner park".

Hmmm...

Have a Curry-würstl mit pommes which does not only solve an aching hunger-problem, but also the parrot-problem since after my first bite I hear an almost surreal shriek some 300 metres away. It is past some 50 football-playing kids and the railway-station. But I understand not even the 50 most disturbing kids in the world, or a train wrecking, could make up a sound like this.

It is the yellow-headed amazons getting ready for their evening activities!



Yellow-headed amazon

27 July



GERMANY



DENMARK



SWEDEN

Leave Stuttgart early in the morning and set aim for Wiesbaden (some 2 hours N).

Easily find "Schlosspark Biebrich" a small park where a substantial gang of 500 ring-necked parakeets have been counted. Probably the close amount of 500 alexandrine parakeets also exist. A population of hybrid amazon-parrots and a fair bunch of Egyptian geese.

In other words: the paradise on earth!

Already when parking the car at around 08.00 we have several parakeets flying over our heads. The park itself is literally boiling with parakeets. No problems at all finding Alexandrine parakeet.



Alexandrine parakeet



Ring-necked parakeet

Rest of the day is spent driving home to Sweden. Just N of Hamburg a black stork in the air.

A red kite telling us the trip is nearly over and that we are close to home.

COMMENTS ON THE SITES

Plotting the below coordinate-string into the search-field in Google Earth will give you the exact locations of the sites. These are the coordinates I have received from helpful birders/found in previous reports. To assist I have given a few comments on the birds and on the sites.

51°58'43.90"N 5°13'56.96"E Bar-headed goose (Heulsewaard)

Up to 57 birds have been reported and the birds seem to be in the area all year around. Site was easily accessible and the car could be parked in a parkingspot "Heulsewaard". Lots of other geese frequent the area (greylag, barnacle and egyptian). Although present, the birds can be tricky hiding in the slopes towards the canal. When visited in summer a lot of fences (and cows...) made walking along the shore harder. I finally found my group of bar-headed by driving along the asphalt road 1,5 km E of the parking scanning downwards the water. Check tremendous dutch site: <http://waarneming.nl> for current sites regarding all dutch species (black swan, bar-headed goose, chilean flamingo etc.)



43°18'15.05"N 0°26'9.20"W Redbilled Leiothrix (Laroin)

The little parkingspot was easily found in the outskirts of Laroin. Not mentioned other places is the obvious white walking-bridge crossing the river which will show you are in the right spot. The birds frequent the narrow strip of wood separating the road and the river. Enter the path going E (opposite where you entered the parking). Start looking 100 metres along the path.

The birds were easily found in the low bushes just by the path and when calling/singing

you will notice them. We noticed a lot of glass on the parking (car-windows). Don't leave car/things too long.



42°59'11.45"N 6°12'8.51"E Reeves Pheasant (Porquerolles)

You need to get out to the island of Porquerolles. Boats leave frequent from "Tour de la Fondue" and only take a few minutes from mainland. First boat around 07.30, last return around 19.30) Cost some 16 EUR with a return ticket.

Staying overnight at the island is expensive, but the Island is beautiful and visiting the pheasants early/late requires it.

(Unless you take a water-taxi which is said to be a quite cheap alternative, not investigated by us).

We instead found a good hotel in Hyeres (5 kms from boats) "Le Mediteranee" at approx 85 EUR for two persons with

breakfast. After arriving at the island you walk towards the lighthouse (signed "phare"). After a km or so the road (and the signing) branches 90 degrees left. Ignoring this path (going straight) you will find some pools to your right.

Just after these pools venture into the woods to your left (left of the path). This is said to be the best area for the Pheasants.

Some have had problems finding the pheasants. This includes myself. My first/only brief encounter with a male was in the thickest (impassable) areas of this wood. I would guess this is where the birds hide out during the days. Early morning and evening

are otherwise said to be the best, perhaps by waiting out the pheasants coming out to feed.

(Beware that common pheasants are common on the island and also in this part of the woods!)



43°41'30.10"N 7°19'59.95"E Fischers+Masked Lovebird (SJCF)

Just north of the harbour at Saint Jean Cap Ferrat (E Nice) there is a small beach and an adjacent parking-spot.

The birds are easily found in the trees (palmtrees) around the parking. This site is easier (in my opinion) than the below site for Fischer's and Masked lovebirds. My only concern was the clinal variation between (green) Fischer's and green Masked lovebirds (see text)

However: The "blue color-morph" masked (looking manbred...) is in Wikipedia stated to first have been found among wild birds.

I guess you should just look for the extremes and ignore the clinal ones.

The palmtrees are located just by a beach, but nobody seemed to be bothered by my cameras/binoculars.



43°42'24.18"N 7°20'3.90"E Fischers/Masked Lovebird (BSM)

Beaulieu sur Meer. A complementary site to the one above (just a few kms away). However, the above site is in my mind the better of the two.

Felt a bit awkward looking into gardens and backyards. Lots of lovebirds were heard but could not be checked.

Coming from Nice: Look for a church on your left side and the fancy La Reserve restaurant (depicted) on your right. The gardens behind the church should be the best spot.



37° 7'23.78"N 4°45'17.06"W Lesser Flamingo (Fuentedepiedra)

Large lake and lots of flamingoes. The site should probably best be visited before the summer (=before the lake dries out and the flamingos disperse). A good birding-site otherwise so perhaps you should also prepare that this site takes some time. 50.000 flamingos counted at peak (=something to work through...). In addition you probably need to work your way around to different observation-points to cover it all.



37°11'14.12"N 5°55'11.70"W W Olivaceous warbler (Villafranca)

Los Palacios Y Villafranca. Follow the old road (NIV) to Sevilla N out of the town. After approx 2 km take a left immediately before the bridge and the canal. Follow the path till it turns right (along the canal). Turn right again after a few 100 m's (where there is a hut on your right side)

and follow the half-pipe watering-line till you have the NW corner of the pond to your right.

The bushier parts of the NW corner (20X20m?) held at least 10 birds on my visit (skulking but noisy at mid day).



45°23'25.58"N 8°23'36.59"E Sacred Ibis (Oldenico)

At town of Oldenico follow signposting to cemetery (cimiterio). Park here and walk down towards the river. Follow the river some 100 m's to a hide.

In summer (when I visited) the birds were flying everywhere. Just standing at the cemetery parking gave us at least 10 observations during half an hour.

In winter the species is much harder (but still possible).



45°33'53.56"N 8°44'9.02"E Northern Bobwhite (Malpensa airp)

Birds were surprisingly calling the "bob-white"-call even in mid summer (but at first light in morning). Probably better to visit in spring.

Nesting period is stated June/July. In winter you probably need to run around in the scrubs trying to flush the birds.

Had problems finding good access to the site. After driving round this was our way accessing the site:

Go north from town of Turbigo on a dirt-road (broad but bumpy!). "Strada turbighina". Approx 1 km after passing over a canal

the road cleaves into a Y (one road going N two going S). This is where we parked our cars (at our visit the westernmost of the two southgoing roads was shut off). Some 10 metres along the shut-off road a path starts right. Follow this for 200 m and then

take a small path up the small slope and you will see the pools. Take the path between the pools and at the

area for the Northern bobwhites are immediately N off the pools (after a red/white gate).



45°47'2.08"N 8°43'14.33"E Parrotbills (Brabbia Marsh)

In the small town of Inarzo follow the main road into town centre (where the road is so narrow only one car can pass at a time). Here you will find a road crossing (not perfectly cut though!). Take the branch which on a sign states that the road ends (återvändsgränd).

If you find a recycling-station on your right after a 200 m you will know you have chosen the right path. Going a bit further you reach info-signs Park here. Continue along a path (the same direction you arrived, keeping the small creek to your left, without crossing it. Just go on and you will find a bird-hide. You also see a large "gate" (which can be opened) that should lead you towards the reeds (where a cut path should take you out to the birds).

These birds are said to be impossible in summer, spreading out over the large reed-area. Indeed at our try the vegetation after the "gate" was so high, there

reeds were overgrown (no cut path), there were tons of mosquitoes and it was wet. This made an impossible attempt even more impossible.

Remember two species (ashy-throated and vinous-throated) parrotbills congregate in flocks in winter in this area. They can be tricky to separate.



38°40'35.80"N 9°19'25.15"W Crested Myna (Carcavelos)

The fort and the beach makes this site quite obvious to find, but a bit tricky to reach depending on traffic (=outskirts of Lisboa). However: The birds seem to forage around the fort. Be observant already when you are near the town (numerous fly-by observations).

Mornings seem to be best. Some have failed in evenings. Consider the military fort when running around with cameras/binoculars so you do not get into trouble.

We had no problems at all: 3-4 observations in no time.



39°38'39.52"N 7°41'17.91"W Rüppell's Vulture (Vila velha de rodão)

There is an old article in a Birding World magazine around this site (and the vulture). Some things could be clarified: South of Vila Velha do Rodão a bridge runs over the river.

Going south out of Vila Velha: before you reach the bridge (on your left) turn "up the mountains" to your right. After this it is just following the road.

Turn left where you find a lot of signs (to tower and church). Walk towards the tower and you will find the platform overlooking the vulture-cliff.

You will be N of the river overlooking the birds S of the river.



38°43'40.86"N 8°54'17.95"W BH Weaver/YC Bishops (Barrocadealva)

Going N towards the small village of Barroca de Alva you pass over a reedy ditch (and a bridge) by a round building. This is the site for the blackheaded weaver and

yellowcrowned bishop. At our visit (in mid summer) the bishop-males were performing wonderful display-flights. The blackheaded-weavers were a bit more discrete (and shy).

However: walking along the ditch should provide you both species quite easily (as well as common waxbills). The area is good for other wetland birds as well.

This could be a starting-point finding the (harder to find) site for Blackheaded Munia.



38°42'0.34"N 8°52'28.92"W Blackheaded Munia (Rilvas)

(Start from the Barroca de Alva site): Drive back south from the bridge. At the roundabout turn left towards N4. At next roundabout turn left (N) onto N4.

After approx 1,5 km you will pass over a green-fenced bridge. Immediately after this turn right towards some white farmbuildings in the distance.

Make sure you make a safe right-turn (If you start reaching woodland on N4 you have driven too far!)

Drive the shaky road and park by the farm-buildings. To your left just before some sheds (and just when reaching the farm-buildings)

you see a wired fence you need to get over/past (climbing into the ditch to your right worked for us...).

On the other side of the creek you walk right along the creek till you reach the slight turn (left) of the road (approx 200 m, depicted).

Here you will find some bamboo where the Munias are sometimes seen.

Some birders see these birds easily although many have struggled (and so did I...).

We had a problem with bulls on our second attempt at the site: when you start walking away from the wired fence, you will have nowhere to go if the

bulls would approach you (or the wired fence). Instead you could go on the "backside" (without crossing the creek) and find "holes" in the woods to look through.

This could be a good try even without the bulls since you can get good views (from some metres up) of the "backside" of the bamboo.



48°47'52.54"N 9°12'10.68"E Yellow-headed amazon (Unterer schlossgarten)

48°48'10.45"N 9°11'45.02"E Yellow-headed amazon (Rosesteinpark)

48°48'18.81"N 9°12'29.04"E Yellow-headed amazon (Wilhelmina zoo)

These three sites/parks are all connected (Stuttgart).

Start with the site Unterer Schlossgarten. The amazons are/have been breeding in the row of trees just next to the railwaytrack.

I was a bit bugged that I could not find any birds the first two hours of my visit (arriving at approx 17.00). However: when you hear the first call of one of these

birds you will not miss it! It is said these birds are very active in the morning and in the evening. Probably are they keeping very low activity in-between.

Hence: An early or a late visit would be recommended. When we left about 5 pairs were flying around screaming (turning all heads up the trees!).

According to german rules, these populations will be Category C (twitchable) in 2010 (=then been established and breeding for 30 years)

Good Accomodation at Ibis hotel (presselstrasse). 65 EUR a double-room for us, easy access with car, free parking and close to the parks.



50° 2'34.09"N 8°14'6.00"E Alexandrine parakeet (schlosspark biebrich)

Just find the park and you can't miss the birds. 500 ring-necked and almost as many alexandrines frequent the fairly small park. We visited the area around the pond in the north (walking around it was sufficient for many observations).



SPECIES OBSERVED

1	Little grebe	Smådopping
2	Great crested grebe	Skäggdopping
3	Great cormorant	Storskarv
4	Little bittern	Dvärrördröm
5	Night heron	Natthäger
6	Cattle egret	Kohäger
7	Squacco heron	Rallhäger
8	Little egret	Silkeshäger
9	Great white egret	Ägretthäger
10	Gray heron	Gråhäger
11	Purple heron	Purpurhäger
12	White stork	Vit stork
13	Black stork	Svart stork
14	Spoonbill	Skedstork
15	Glossy ibis	Bronsibis
16	Sacred ibis	Helig ibis
17	Greater flamingo	Större flamingo
18	Chilean flamingo	Chileflamingo
19	American flamingo	Amerikansk flamingo
20	Mute swan	Knölsvan
21	Bean Goose	Sädgås
22	Greylag goose	Grågås
23	Canada goose	Kanadagås
24	Barnacle goose	Vitkindad gås
25	Shelduck	Gravand
26	Ruddy shelduck	Rostand
27	Egyptian goose	Nilgås
28	Bar-headed goose	Stripgås
29	Pochard	Brunand
30	Mallard	Gräsand
31	Gadwall	Snatterand
32	Northern pintail	Stjärtand
33	Shoveler	Skedand
34	Wigeon	Bläsand
35	Teal	Kricka
36	Tufted duck	Vigg
37	Common goldeneye	Knipa
38	Ferruginous duck	Vitögd dykand
39	White-headed duck	Kopparand
40	Griffon vulture	Gåsgam
41	Black vulture	Grågam
42	Egyptian vulture	Smutsgam

43	Spanish imperial eagle	Spansk kejsarörn
44	Golden eagle	Kungsörn
45	Short-toed eagle	Ormörn
46	Booted eagle	Dvärgörn
47	Bonelli's eagle	Hökörn
48	Black kite	Brunglada
49	Marsh harrier	Brun kärnhök
50	Montagu's harrier	Ängshök
51	Common buzzard	Ormvråk
52	Honey buzzard	Bivråk
53	Sparrowhawk	Sparvhök
54	Goshawk	Duvhök
55	Kestrel	Tornfalk
56	Lesser kestrel	Rödfalk
57	Hobby	Lärfalk
58	Peregrine falcon	Pilgrimsfalk
59	Red-legged partridge	Rödhöna
60	Reeve's pheasant	Kungsfasan
61	Nothern bobwhite	Vitstrupig vaktel
62	Pheasant	Fasan
63	Water rail	Vattenrall
64	Spotted crane	Småfläckig sumphöna
65	Moorhen	Rörhöna
66	Coot	Sothöna
67	Oystercatcher	Strandskata
68	Avocet	Skärfläcka
69	Black-winged stilt	Styltlöpare
70	Stone curlew	Tjockfot
71	Ringed plover	Större strandpipare
72	Little ringed plover	Mindre strandpipare
73	Kentish plover	Svartbent strandpipare
74	Northern lapwing	Tofsvipa
75	Wood sandpiper	Grönbena
76	Green sandpiper	Skogssnäppa
77	Common sandpiper	Drillsnäppa
78	Redshank	Rödbena
79	Spotted redshank	Svartsnäppa
80	Greenshank	Gluttsnäppa
81	Black-tailed godwit	Rödspov
82	Eurasian curlew	Storspov
83	Common snipe	Enkelbeckasin
84	Ruff	Brushane
85	Black-headed gull	Skrattmå
86	Common gull	Fiskmå
87	Mediterranean gull	Svarthuvad må
88	Herring gull	Gråtrut

89	Yellow-legged gull	Medelhavstrut
90	Lesser black-backed gull	Silltrut
91	Black-backed gull	Havstrut
92	Little tern	Småtärna
93	Sandwich tern	Kentsk tärna
94	Gull-billed tern	Sandtärna
95	Common tern	Fisktärna
96	Black-tern	Svarttärna
97	Feral dove	Tamduva
98	Stock dove	Skogsduva
99	Wood pigeon	Ringduva
100	Collared dove	Turkduva
101	Turtle-dove	Turturduva
102	Cuckoo	Gök
103	Ring-necked parakeet	Halsbandsparakit
104	Alexandrine parakeet	Alexanderparakit
105	Yellow-headed amazon	Gulhuvad amazon
106	Long-eared owl	Hornuggla
107	Little owl	Minervauggla
108	Red-throated nightjar	Rödhsald nattskärna
109	Pallid swift	Blek tornseglare
110	Common swift	Tornseglare
111	Alpine swift	Alpseglare
112	White-rumped swift	Kafferseglare
113	Hoopoe	Härfågel
114	Kingfisher	Kungsfiskare
115	Bee-eater	Biätare
116	Green woodpecker	Gröngöling
117	Great spotted woodpecker	Större hackspett
118	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Mindre hackspett
119	Black woodpecker	Spillkråka
120	Skylark	Sånglärka
121	Crested lark	Tofslärka
122	Thekla lark	Lagerlärka
123	short-toed lark	Korttållärka
124	Calandra lark	Kalanderlärka
125	Sandmartin	Backsvala
126	Cragmartin	Klippsvala
127	Swallow	Ladusvala
128	Red-rumped swallow	Rostgumpssvala
129	House martin	Hussvala
130	Meadow pipit	Ängsfiplärka
131	Water pipit	Vattenfiplärka
132	Pied wagtail	Sädesärka
133	Yellow wagtail	Gulärka
134	Gray wagtail	Forsärka

135	Wren	Gärdsmyg
136	Dunnock	Järnsparv
137	European robin	Rödhake
138	Nightingale	Sydnäktergal
139	Bluethroat	Blåhake
140	Black redstart	Svart rödstjört
141	Whinchat	Buskskvätta
142	Stonechat	Svarthakad buskskvätta
143	Wheatear	Stenskvätta
144	Blue rock-thrush	Blåtrast
145	Songthrush	Taltrast
146	Fieldfare	Björktrast
147	Blackbird	Koltrast
148	Garden warbler	Trädgårdssångare
149	Blackcap	Svarthätta
150	Lesser whitethroat	Ärtsångare
151	Sardinian warbler	Sammetsätta
152	Whitethroat	Törnsångare
153	Dartford warbler	Provincesångare
154	Sedge warbler	Sävsångare
155	Fan-tailed warbler	Grässångare
156	Grasshopper warbler	Gräshoppångare
157	Cetti warbler	Cettisångare
158	Reed warbler	Rörsångare
159	Marsh warbler	Kärrsångare
160	Icterine warbler	Härmsångare
161	Western olivaceous warbler	Macchiasångare
162	Willow warbler	Lövsångare
163	Wood warbler	Grönsångare
164	Western bonelli's warbler	Bergsångare
165	Common chiffchaff	Gransångare
166	Iberian chiffchaff	Iberisk gransångare
167	Goldcrest	Kungsfågel
168	Firecrest	Brandkronad kungsfågel
169	Spotted flycatcher	Grå flugsnappare
170	Pied flycatcher	Svartvit flugsnappare
171	Great tit	Talgoxe
172	Coal tit	Svartmes
173	Blue tit	Blåmes
174	Crested tit	Tofsmes
175	Long-tailed tit	Stjärtmes
176	Bearded tit	Skäggmes
177	Nuthatch	Nötväcka
178	Treecreeper	Trädkrypare
179	Short-toed treecreeper	Trädgårdsträdkrypare
180	Red-backed shrike	Törnskata

181	Woodchat shrike	Rödhuvad törnskata
182	Southern grey shrike	Ökenvarfågel
183	Azure-winged magpie	Blåskata
184	Magpie	Skata
185	Jay	Nötskrika
186	Nutcracker	Nötkråka
187	Jackdaw	Kaja
188	Rook	Råka
189	Crow	Kråka
190	Raven	Korp
191	Common starling	Stare
192	Black starling	Svartstare
193	Golden oriole	Sommargylling
194	House sparrow	Gråsparv
195	Spanish sparrow	Spansk sparv
196	Tree sparrow	Pilfink
197	Chaffinch	Bofink
198	Linnet	Hämpling
199	Goldfinch	Steglits
200	Greenfinch	Grönfink
201	Siskin	Grönsiska
202	Serin	Gulhämpling
203	Bullfinch	Domherre
204	Hawfinch	Stenknäck
205	Common crossbill	Mindre korsnäbb
206	Reed bunting	Sävsparv
207	Yellowhammer	Gulsparv
208	Cirl bunting	Häcksparv
209	Corn bunting	Kornsparv
210	Red-billed Leiothrix	Rödnäbbad mesia
211	Crested Myna	Större tofsmajna
212	Yellow-crowned bishop	Gulkronad biskop
213	Black-headed weaver	Svarthuvad vävare
214	Fischers lovebird	Fischers dvärgpapegoja
215	Masked lovebird	Svarthuvad dvärgpapegoja
216	Common waxbill	Helenaastrild