

Corsica 25/5/2003

This was not a serious birding trip but a family holiday booked with Simply Corsica, which included flights and car hire (Renault Kangoo). It was based at 2 centres, the first week at Piedicroce in the Castagniccia Mountains South West of Bastia Airport and the second week in Maora at the base of the Golfu di Sant' Amanza in the South of the island. The dates were a compromise between trying to get the best birding and hopefully guaranteed good weather. Information on sites was found in Crozier: A Birdwatching Guide to France South of the Loire including Corsica, LPU: Where to Watch Birds in France and many trip reports found on the Internet. Special thanks to Chris Lamsdell, Mike Taylor and Peter Rueegg for supplying extra information and to Brian Small who gave me the information on species and sub species likely to be encountered in Corsica. (See Appendix)

Sunday 25th May

Arrived at Gatwick Airport at 8.45 in plenty of time for our 11.00 flight and duly checked in and called to the departure gates at 10.40 only to be told that our aircraft had "technical" problems and had diverted to Manchester. At 13.00 we were told that we would be flying with Icelandic Air at 15.00, we eventually left at 16.00 and arrived in Figari at 18.00 local time. Ticked off **Hooded Crow** before the plane touched down and added **Spotless Starling** while collecting our suitcases. We then had to drive 170+km up the East coast to our apartment; it was after 19.00 by the time we actually left the airport. We arrived at our apartment at 22.15 having negotiated the mountainous hairpin bends in the dark only to find a note in pidgin English pinned to the door of our apartment to the effect that the owner had given up on us and gone home leaving the key with La Refuge. We wandered through the unlit streets of the village until we stumbled on La Refuge and claimed our key. Went to sleep that night to the sound of **Scops Owls** calling around the valley.

Monday 26th May

Woke up late and staggered out into the bright sunlight on our balcony to find an amazing panorama of mountains and wooded valleys before me. Our village was perched on the edge of our ridge and our apartment perched precariously on the edge of our village. Although we came in at ground level at the front the back of our living room balcony was 2 storeys high. The air was alive with screaming **Swifts** swirling around my head. You could hear the whistle of their wings they were so close and sometimes even feel the down draught. A **Red Kite** flew lazily across the valley below the balcony level mobbed by the ubiquitous **Hooded Crows**. Over breakfast we watched a family party of **Spotted Flycatchers** feeding in a tree below the balcony and a lizard warmed itself inside the glass of a rare streetlight, **Jays** seemed to be everywhere and I quickly found the drumming post for the local **Great-spotted Woodpecker** giving great scope views most mornings thereafter. Two or three pairs of **Crag Martins** patrolled the lower slopes below the apartment and **Italian Sparrows** "chirruped" in the gutters above. As it was our first day we had to do some shopping and so drove down to the nearest shops at Folelli 23km away. On the drive down numerous **Buzzards** flew up from the telephone poles and **Red Kites** seemed quite common around the coastal towns. With the shopping safely back in the fridge we headed off towards Haut Asco. En route we disturbed a flock of about 15 **Corsican Citril Finches** feeding on the roadside in the village of Campanu. Stopping at a number of likely looking habitats (often restricted by a lack of safe places to park on the narrow twisting roads.) we found **Blackcaps**, **Coal Tits**, **Cirl Buntings** and a couple of **Marmorata's Warblers** near Morosaglia. NB. The British drive on the left, Europeans drive on the right and Corsicans drive straight down the middle especially on the mountain roads. Don't be afraid to use your horn on the frequent blind bends. Corsica is blessed with more than its fair share of endemic and semi endemic sub species, which makes even the common species that little bit more interesting. (See appendix).

In the Asco Valley saw numerous **Spotless Starlings** a few **Red Kites** and a **Tree Pipit**. Tried the location recommended by Crozier 7km beyond Asco Village but despite over an hour of searching heard and saw nothing except **Chaffinches**, **Coal Tits** and **Great-spotted Woodpeckers**. Drove on up to the ski centre car park where we found **Corsican Citril Finches** easily but nothing else.

Tuesday 27th

Early start in the drizzle in the southwest corner of Lake Biguglia, as described by Crozier. (I couldn't find the yellow post box although the rest of the directions were good enough to follow). At the bend in the road by the rubbish dump the woodland/scrub to the left held singing **Nightingales**, a family of **Red-backed Shrikes**, **Cirl Bunting**, **Serin**, **Whitethroat** and **Melodious Warbler**. The rough grassland at the end of the runway to Bastia Airport was alive with **Corn Buntings**, plus a number of **Italian Sparrows**, **Yellow-legged Gulls** and **Zitting Cisticolas**. Although I found it very hard to pick them out as they danced around the fields and marsh, I eventually got good telescope views. A **Quail** was heard at the end of the runway but unsurprisingly I never saw it, a **Hoopoe** was also heard calling in the distance. On the lake itself there were a number of places here where you could scope the water but the majority of birds turned out to be 100's of **Coots**; the only other birds seen on the open water were **Great crested Grebes**. Around the visible margins patient scoping only produced a couple of

Mallards , 3 **Pochard** and a **Little Grebe**. **Marsh Harriers** were constantly patrolling the reed beds and a **Purple Heron** flew up but was soon lost to view. The reed beds were eerily silent with only 1 **Reed Warbler** heard and eventually seen but no sight or sound of any Great Reed Warblers. On the way back along the track I stopped at the start of the first bit of woodland and scanned over a horse paddock covered with yellow flowers (sorry I'm not a botanist) and found the **Hoopoe** having a dust bath.

Drove round to the eastern side but found it very hard to see over the lake itself and parking was also quite difficult due to the speed of the traffic. The maquis to the east of the D107 in the southern end of the lake held numerous **Sardinian Warblers** , **Blackcaps**, **Corn Bunting**, and **Nightingales** . **Bee-eaters** were also plentiful especially on the wires between the lake and the road. A **Wryneck** was heard but not seen about half way along the lake. At the north end by the car park opposite the beach the trees and reeds died back giving views over the much narrower part of the lake. Here, there are a series of posts in the middle of the lake, which were used by the roosting **Yellow-legged Gulls** and to my delight an adult **Audouin's Gull** plus a 1st summer **Black-headed Gull**. On the far side of the lake there was a small group of **Grey Herons** and **Little Egrets** plus a mobile flock of 23 **Whiskered Terns**. Back home for a late breakfast and a day of site seeing. In the evening managed to track down and actually see albeit fleetingly in the dark, 2 **Scops Owls** at the edge of the village.

Wednesday 28th May

Took Maggy to Corte for general sightseeing and shopping and then dashed back to Haut Asco. Totally underestimated the time it took to drive on Corsican roads even though the road to the start of the valley near Ponte Leccia is reasonable. This left me with approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to find a **Corsican Nuthatch** or push my luck and be late picking Maggy up in Corte. As it happened, I needn't have worried, scrambling up the forest above the ski station I heard a bird trilling and stumbled upon a nesting pair obviously feeding young. The birds were constantly in and out of the nest hole and called every time they flew off. Due to the steep slope I was able to go uphill of the nest tree and view the birds through my scope in comfort without breaking my neck. I watched them for about twenty minutes before retracing my step back to the ski station where I found the **Corsican Citril Finches** ridiculously easy to see and relatively numerous. Dashing back to Corte I managed one stop in the Asco valley to watch a singing **Marmora's Warbler** where I also heard a flock of **Crossbills** but frustratingly never saw the birds. For lunch we drove up the narrow, winding and often sheer sided road in the Verghello Valley. The views were spectacular if a little disconcerting with nothing between you and precipitous drops below a crumbling road. Drove as far as we could take the car and ate lunch overlooking the peaks opposite. I thought I had found a **Mouflon** silhouetted on the far skyline but the telescope revealed it to be a wild (?) goat. Apart from that with the sun beating down we saw very little else except **Chaffinches** and some distant **Alpine Choughs**. After lunch we continued on foot along the track but again every thing was quiet not even the **Chaffinches** were calling. Managed to see a **Mistle Thrush** and a **Sparrowhawk** sped over the treetops in front of us plus a few **Coal Tits** but after 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ hours we had had enough and retraced our steps to the car, adding nothing different to our list.

Thursday 29th May.

Another early start to Lake Biguglia arriving just after first light. Again the reed beds were silent with no reed or sedge warblers singing just the zitting of **Cisticolas** in the rough grass behind. As before, there were plenty of **Corn Buntings** in the bushes with **Red-backed Shrikes**, **Sardinian Warblers**, **Serins**, and **Nightingales** all showing well. Took the track along the canal, which was overgrown and very wet from overnight rain. Saw very little except a **Turtle Dove** and a calling acro, which turned out to be **Sedge** instead of the hoped for **Moustached Warbler** (always the optimist). I found no breaks in the vegetation so after a while retraced my steps and tried walking south on a track a little nearer to the waters edge but still found it difficult to get any views of open water. A **Purple Heron** and a number of **Marsh Harriers** were seen and a **Water Rail** heard but not found. Back by the rubbish dump seemed to give the best views over the water but only new bird from the day before was a **Reeve** flushed by a **Marsh Harrier**. On the way out I stopped at the horse paddock on the off chance and found the **Hoopoe** again quietly feeding in the corner.

Drove round the east side of the lake and found the track out onto the central peninsular. The track is very rough but I couldn't drive very far along it as it stopped at a locked gate (about where the peninsular swings south). However, throughout its length it did give good clear views looking south over the lake but again all I could find were hundreds more **Coots** plus a few **Great-crested Grebes**. At the end of the track, as I got out to explore, a falcon circled overhead. Expecting to find a hobby I was pleasantly surprised to see a first summer **Red-footed Falcon** when I took a closer look through my bins. I watched the bird hawking over the fields to the north of the track through my scope for about 10 minutes before it finally flew out of view. I explored a footpath that continued west from the end of the road, but it looked private so I didn't go far but I did manage to see 2 **Hoopoes**, one sitting on a fence post and another calling from some overhead cables. At the posts in the northeast corner I found 2 **Audouin's Gulls** amongst the **Yellow-legged Gulls** but there was no sign of any terns.

Returned home for a late breakfast and watched a pair of **Ravens** circle over our balcony accompanied by the usual flocks of screaming **Swifts**. After breakfast we decided to explore the local area driving to various points and then exploring on foot.

Saw very few birds except for a number of **Red Kites** plus a couple of **Corsican Citril Finches**, **Cirl Buntings** and **Long-tailed Tits**. However we did see quite a few butterflies including **Corsican Heath**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, **Wall**, **Painted Lady**, **Small Copper**, **Wood White** (?), **Large White**, **Brown Argos** plus other blues and fritillaries I couldn't identify.

Friday 30th May.

Another dawn start, this time heading for Cap Corse. I managed to get through Bastia without getting lost and before any traffic got on the roads, which was a good start. Stopped at numerous points overlooking the sea searching for shearwaters and shags. I was temporarily fooled by a scuba diver with flippers at one point (well I was trying to drive at the same time) but eventually saw a couple of **Shags** and both **Cory's (Scopoli's)** and **Yelkouan Shearwaters**. A distant group of about **6 Bottlenosed Dolphins** were a bonus. Singing **Subalpine Warblers** were also seen at a number of stop off points. After Macinaggio the road deteriorated badly, it took as long to drive from Bastia to Macinaggio as it did from Macinaggio to Barcaggio! Barcaggio was very quiet for birds, not surprising with clear skies and a scorching sun. The bushes held very little except a **Reed Warbler** and a family of **Spotted Flycatchers**, while on the heath I saw **Whinchat**, **Sardinian** and **Marmora's Warblers**. I also heard and saw a couple of **Yellow Wagtails** but only in flight so they were of undetermined race. The pools were all but dry and devoid of birds except for **Yellow legged Gulls** but I did see **Red-veined Darter** and **Lesser Emperor** dragonflies, plus a few I couldn't identify. The remaining walk to the tour was fairly uneventful with a couple of **Wheatears** and a **Tawny Pipit**. At the point a leisurely sea watch provided close views of both **Shearwaters** again, plus a good number **Shags** and the ubiquitous **Yellow-legged Gulls**. On the return walk back to the car I heard and saw a small flock of **Crossbills** fly overhead.

In the afternoon we drove down to Lake d'Urbino. From the top of the hill looking north the mud and shallow water held **5 Grey Herons** a couple of **Little Egrets** and **3 Oystercatchers** and to the south the main body of water was dotted with pontoons and posts all occupied by hundreds of **Yellow-legged Gulls**. Careful scoping of the far shore produced more **Little Egrets** and a **Great White Egret** plus a pair of **Shelduck** with young. Tantalizingly brief views were had of a pair of terns flying out of sight looking good for **Gull-billed Terns** but had to remain unproven. **Bee-eaters** seemed to be on every wire available and flocks of **Italian Sparrows** chattered in the bushes but despite searching I couldn't find any rock sparrows among them. Further down the hill towards the jetties a **Quail** was heard and **Serins** and a **Nightingale** seen plus even more **Yellow-legged Gulls** on the islands. Looking from the top of the hill again I found the **Great White Egret** and the 2 terns standing in the shallows and was able to confirm their id as **Gull-billed Terns**. Driving back towards the main coastal road I found a first summer **Red-footed Falcon** sitting on some roadside wires pretending to be bee-eater.

Saturday 31st May.

Early start, to try and find Lake Diane. (I had missed the turning yesterday). I tried first at the turning to the signposted restaurant but this ended up in an oyster farm and the restaurant car park neither of which had good views over the lake. So I gave up and drove on to Lake d'Urbino. Stopping by the first orchard on the right of the road leading to the lake I found a pair of **Badius Woodchats** sitting on the wires accompanied by a pair of **Corn buntings** and **Bee-eaters**. A **Honey Buzzard** flapped past and obligingly dropped down in the top of a nearby bush and preened for more than 10 minutes before flying north. The shallows of the lake held only a **Ruff** and **2 Grey Herons** with a **Marsh Harrier** hunting over the reed beds, while the lakeside bushes had **Serin**, **Goldfinches**, **Nightingales** and **Italian Sparrows**. Then back to the apartment for a leisurely breakfast.

Sunday 1st June.

Tidied up the apartment, packed the car and on the road by 10.00. Took the track off the N 198 signposted "Coteaux d'Diane", which took us through vast areas of vineyards where **Bee-eaters** were again abundant. Couldn't get really near the lake but did manage to scope it from a distance but apparently not a lot to see. Around the vineyards we saw numerous **Red Kites** and **Buzzards**, two singing **Woodlarks** and a **Two-tailed Pasha**. At the end of the track we came to a house with a couple of outbuildings with numerous **Italian** and **Tree Sparrows**, with a bit of searching I eventually found an obliging **Rock Sparrow** feeding under a derelict tractor. Drove round to Lake d'Urbino for lunch but found much the same as yesterday except for the Ruff. The **Woodchats** were sitting on the same wires as the day before but the sun was in the wrong position and Maggy could only get poor views. Drove round to the reservoir to the west of Lake d'Urbino but this was devoid of birds except for **Coots** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** and a pair of **Little-ringed Plovers**.

Monday 2nd June.

Yet another early morning start. Drove into the harbour car park in Bonifacio and the second bird that I saw was a classic male **Spanish Sparrow** hopping around in a flowerbed. (The first was a **Blue Tit**.) Having clinched my target bird so quickly I jumped back in my car and drove up to the cliffs and maquis near the sign for "Domaine de Licetto" as recommended by Crozier. The maquis area itself was very quiet the only birds singing was a **Tawny Pipit** and a **Blue Rock Thrush** on the cliffs

below. A walk back towards Bonifacio along the cliff top produced a family of **Peregrines**, another male **Blue Rock Thrush** and plenty of **Sardinian Warblers**. By the time I reached Bonifacio opposite the Citadel the sun was getting higher and **Swifts** started to fill the air. In the harsh sunlight it was hard to gauge the true colour of the birds as they twisted and turned in front of various backgrounds of sea, sky and cliff/citadel changing colour as they did so. After prolonged observation I was happy that I was watching **Pallid Swifts** but I must say that I would be less than confident with a single bird observation back home. Amongst all the birds around the cliffs I found a few parties of the spectacular **Alpine Swift**, which is a truly enormous swift when seen close to. A third male **Blue Rock Thrush** was seen on the walls of the Citadel glowing brilliantly in the sun along with a few **Jackdaws**. Later in the day another **Spanish Sparrow** and **White Wagtails** were seen during a shopping trip within the Citadel.

Sitting out in the evening on our terrace overlooking the Golfu di Sant' Amanza I watched 3 or 4 **Little Egrets** trying to fish on (fish farm?) containers that had been netted over. They were only successful if they all stood on the centre of the net at the same time to make it sag enough for them to reach their prey. I wonder how long it had taken them to work that out? A **Cuckoo** and **Hobby** were also seen as we sat out on our terrace, and as darkness began to fall a **Scops Owl** started to call and a **Nightjar** was heard churring across the valley. Staring into the gathering gloom I failed to spot the **Nightjar** but I found the **Scops Owl** sitting on wires just below the terrace where it remained long enough for telescope views before it got too dark to see.

Tuesday 3rd June.

A short morning walk before breakfast around St Julien mentioned in the LPO Where to watch birds in France, was hampered by the early morning mist, but a singing **Nightingale** was seen and a **Spanish Sparrow** was feeding on the road back at the car. Stopping off at various points on the way back to the apartment resulted in **Cuckoo, Serin, Woodlark, Long-tailed Tits, Jay, Blackcap, Dartford** and **Sardinian Warblers**. A **Hoopoe** was heard calling and a flock of **Rock Doves** looked more convincing than some seen in the towns the previous week.

With just about all my target birds under my belt I was content to relax and let Maggy set the agenda, which resulted in a boat trip to Iles Lavezzi and a day on the beach. The crossing produced excellent close views of **Shags, Cory's** and **Yelkouan Shearwaters** and the walk to the beach yet more **Sardinian Warblers** a **Spotted Flycatcher** and my only female **Blue Rock Thrush** of the trip.

That evening we were ready and waiting and the **Nightjars** performed in style as we sipped our wine on the candlelit terrace.

Wednesday 4th June.

My pre breakfast walk took me from the cliffs at Bonifacio past the signal station to the lighthouse and back. I was relieved that I had seen Marmora's Warblers in the previous week, as they were conspicuous by their absence as were Dartford Warblers. **Sardinian Warblers** on the other hand seemed to be in every bush. Other birds seen on the stroll included **Peregrine, Corn and Cirl Buntings, Linnets** and a singing **Tawny Pipit**. Looking out to sea from the lighthouse produced both **Shearwaters** plus **Alpine** and **Pallid Swifts**.

A day on Rondinara beach followed where a flock of **Long-tailed Tits** and a **Little Egret** were the only birds of interest seen, but a **Hoopoe** flew over the car on the journey home.

Thursday 5th June.

Due to the heat Maggy decided against the beach and chose a drive out to the Bavella Pass via the Cascades de Piscia de Gallo. The reservoir to the south of the cascades in common with most French bodies of water was a dead loss. Not even any Coots this time only a couple of **Yellow-legged Gulls**. The walk out to the cascades although short was quite steep and arduous with very little shade from the sun and very few birds were seen, only **Raven, Corsican Citril Finch, Spotted Flycatcher, Wren** and **Coal Tit**. At the end of the official track only the outlet of the falls could be seen. However a scramble down a near vertical wooded slope brought you out at the base of the falls from where you could appreciate the true scale. **Alpine Swifts** and **Crag Martins** were feeding around the gorge below the cascade.

The views at Col de Bavella were stunning and a magnificent backdrop for our lunch. Scanning the peaks over lunch produced **Alpine Chough, Buzzards, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk** and a distant and all too brief sighting of **Lammerergerier**. In the woods around the Col we found **Woodlark, Coal Tit** and numerous **Corsican Citril Finches**.

Friday 6th June.

My early morning exploration took me to the coastal maquis south of the N 196 just outside Bonifacio but I found very little except one **Dartford** and numerous **Sardinian Warblers** and another flock of **Rock Doves**. A walk out to the Ermitage de la Trinité produced yet more **Sardinian Warblers** a **Blackcap** and a couple of singing **Subalpine Warblers** but not a lot else. Returning via the D 60 I found a **Dartford Warbler** a family party of **Marmora's Warblers, Tawny Pipit, Woodlark** and a **Buzzard** all in the vicinity of some large green water storage cylinders. After breakfast we headed further north along the N

196 to the Megalithes de Cauria, stopping on our way at Etang de Ventilegne, which stank of rotting seaweed and only held a **Little Egret** and 2 **Little-ringed Plovers**. The Pont de Figari also looked interesting habitat but I could only find a lone **Little Egret**. The drive along the D48 and D 48A produced numerous **Red-backed Shrikes** on the roadside bushes and wires and the walk out to the menhirs produced yet more **Red-backed Shrikes**, **Corn** and **Cirl Buntings**, **Red Kites** and **Buzzards**. The menhirs themselves were poorly signposted (we only found one site by mistake), and there was no information when we found them.

Lunch and the afternoon were spent on the beautiful Roccapina beach where there was a **Subalpine Warbler** and a pair of **Crag Martins** hawking over the beach, almost literally at sea level!

Saturday 7th June.

Brief stroll before breakfast along the D 60 again this morning produced **Blackcap**, **Sardinian**, **Subalpine**, **Dartford** and **Marmora's Warblers** plus an almost deafening **Nightingale** and a flock of **Rock Doves**. We so enjoyed the landscape and scenery around the Col de Bavella that we thought we would return to explore some more. However even up in the mountains it was extremely hot, making walking a real effort and almost certainly reducing any bird activity. We tried several recommended and suitable looking sites but no Nuthatches were seen or heard. Again **Corsican Citril Finches** were very numerous but the only other birds seen were **Linnets**, **Coal Tits** and **Alpine Choughs**. We then drove via Sartene to Roccapina beach for a quick cooling dip and then back to the apartment. In the evening we went for a stroll around the Citadel in Bonifacio to see if any Cory's Shearwaters would come in to the stacks at dusk and although we saw both **Cory's** and **Yelkouan Shearwaters** distantly, none came close to the cliffs.

Sunday 8th June.

Our last morning on the island was taken up with packing and clearing out our apartment, (not that we were messy but we did seem to get sand everywhere). We returned our car to the rental depot and checked in at the airport in Figari and were pleasantly surprised to find that our flight would be on time. A final stroll around the airport turned up the usual **Hooded Crows** and **Spotless Starlings** which seemed so exciting only two weeks before plus excellent views of a pair of **Rock Sparrows** on the perimeter fence.

Corsica 25/5/03 – 08/6/03 Bird List

Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Cory' Shearwater (Scopoli's)*
Yelkouan Shearwater**
Cormorant
Shag (desmarestii)*
Little Egret
Great White Egret*
Grey Heron
Purple Heron
Shelduck
Mallard
Pochard
Honey Buzzard
Red Kite
Marsh Harrier
Sparrowhawk (wolterstorffi)
Buzzard (arrigonii)
Kestrel
Red-footed Falcon*
Hobby
Peregrine
Red-legged Partridge
Quail (heard only)
Water Rail (heard only)
Moorhen
Coot

Oystercatcher
 Little-ringed Plover
 Ruff
 Black-headed Gull
 Audouin's Gull*
 Yellow-legged Gull
 Gull-billed tern*
 Whiskered Tern*
 Rock Dove*
 Woodpigeon
 Collared Dove
 Turtle Dove
 Cuckoo
 Scops Owl (tchusii?)*
 Nightjar
 Swift
 Pallid Swift**
 Alpine Swift
 Bee-eater
 Hoopoe
Great-spotted Woodpecker (parroti)
 Woodlark
 Crag Martin
 Swallow
 House Martin
 Tawny Pipit
 Yellow Wagtail (race not determined)
 Grey Wagtail
 White Wagtail
 Wren (koenigi)
 Robin
 Nightingale
 Whinchat
 Stonechat
 Wheatear
 Blue Rock Thrush**
 Blackbird
 Mistle Thrush (deichleri)
 Cetti's Warbler
 Fan-tailed Warbler
 Sedge Warbler
 Reed Warbler
 Melodious Warbler
 Marmora's Warbler (sarda)*
 Dartford Warbler
 Subalpine Warbler (Moltoni's)*
 Sardinian Warbler*
 Whitethroat
 Blackcap (paulucii)
 Goldcrest
 Spotted Flycatcher (balearica)
 Long-tailed Tit (irbii)
 Coal Tit (sardus)
 Blue Tit (ogliastrae)
 Great Tit (corsus)
 Corsican Nuthatch**

Red-backed Shrike
Woodchat Shrike (*badius*)*
Jay (*corsicanus*)
Alpine Chough
Jackdaw
Hooded Crow (*sardonicus*)*
Raven
Spotless Starling**
Italian Sparrow (*italiae*)*
Spanish Sparrow*
Tree Sparrow
Rock Sparrow**
Chaffinch (*tyrrhenica*)
Serin
Corsican Citril Finch**
Greenfinch (*madaraszi*)
Goldfinch (*tchusii*)
Linnet
Crossbill (*Corsicana*)
Cirl Bunting (*nigrostriata*)
Corn Bunting

** Life Tick (7)

* French Tick (23)

Appendix: (Information kindly supplied by Brian Small).

Key taxa

Endemic species

Corsican Nuthatch *Sitta whiteheadi*

Corsican Citril Finch *Serinus corsicana* (recently split from Citril Finch: see Ibis 142:487-490, 2000)

Semi-endemic species [also occurring elsewhere in Mediterranean islands]

Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* (split from Mediterranean Shearwater *P mauretanicus*)

Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (sometimes split from Cory's Shearwater *C borealis* and Cape Verde Shearwater *C edwardsii*) [pale centre of underside of primaries, also paler head and mantle]

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* (split from Herring Gull *L argentatus* and Caspian Gull *L cachinnans*)

Iberian Wagtail *Motacilla iberiae* and Ashy-headed Wagtail *M cinereocapilla* [hybrid zone in Corsica] (often split from Blue-headed Wagtail *M flava*, but Iberian and Ashy-headed are also lumped in *cinereocapilla*)

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* [vagrant in NW Europe; also in Sardinia] (split from Balearic Warbler *S balearica*)

Endemic and semi-endemic subspecies, which can be treated as allospecies

Mediterranean Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* (structure and colour of bare parts, plumage of immatures) [compared with nominate: bare skin at base of lower mandible larger and yellow; bill all yellow except for dark culmen and tip; feet brown with yellowish webs; bill longer and more slender; crest less long; immatures more white on under parts]

Corsican Common Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris corsa* [restricted to Corsica!] (Different sound, plumage much like *macroductyla* but sharper streaked white and brighter rufous outer webs of primaries, longest wing of all ssp, and especially much **longer bill**; male bill skull m 20.8 mm [17.8-22.0], *macroductyla* 16.9 or 18.5 [max 20.2], *britannica* 17.4, *persica* 17.5, *familiaris* 16.6-17.5)

Corsican Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra corsicana* [compared with nominate: female rather restricted green with mainly dark grey head and body, male slightly darker red, juv with broader streaks, bill slightly longer, deeper and broader; sound different]

Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans moltonii* [vagrant in NW Europe] (diagnostic wren call, buffy salmon pink under parts instead of the reddish-orange of nominate and narrower submoustachial stripe [*albistriata* is generally darker and has marked contrast between more restricted chestnut tinge of throat and breast and whitish rest]) [also in Sardinia, Balearic Islands and parts of Italy; vagrant in UK]

Balearic Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata tyrrhenica* (diagnostic differences in plumage, perhaps similar to *balearica*; adults *balearica* (and *tyrrhenica*?) with white ground colour of upper head; *tyrrhenica* and *balearica* much less streaking on breast but, at least in *tyrrhenica*, with odd broad spots; whiter on flanks and under wing in *balearica* (and *tyrrhenica*?); more warm brown on upper parts in *tyrrhenica* (much paler in *balearica* than in nominate); *balearica* significantly shorter wings 76.5-85.8 (instead of 80.6-91.4; *tyrrhenica* also short: 79.5-85), $p2 = p5/6$ instead of $p4/5$ in *balearica* and probably *tyrrhenica*)

Balearic Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator badius* (diagnostic difference in wing pattern with no white patch at base of primaries, narrow black forehead at centre (5-8 in male vs 8-14 in other ssp), more grey on rump, darker cap and under parts, thicker and shorter bill, longer wing; nominate *L s senator* is rare)

Italian Sparrow *Passer italiae* (sometimes considered a subspecies of either House Sparrow or Spanish Sparrow (latter is scarce) or regarded as a stable hybrid population of these two species)

Blue Tit *Parus [caeruleus]* (recent research shows that there are two vocal types of Blue Tit (only one subspecies *P c ogliastreae*, also occurring in S Iberia, is known for Corsica); possibly, Corsican birds involve two cryptic species identical in plumage and structure but with different habitat preferences (evergreen or deciduous oaks), different timing of breeding, and different vocalisations)

(Semi-) endemic subspecies (most of them also in Sardinia), which seem to be part of a cline (perhaps better called 'races'):

Common Buzzard *arrigonii* [uppers more brown and unders more streaked, less barred],

Goshawk *arrigonii* [smaller and darker, head more blackbrown, unders more heavily barred, in juv unders more rufous and darker],

Sparrowhawk *wolterstorffi* [smallest ssp, darker overall, more heavily barred below, male slaty-black above, female dark sooty-brown above],

Barn Owl *ernestii* (palest subspecies, whiter than nominate, especially paler, more yellowish, on uppers),

Scops Owl *tchusii* [usually synonym of nominate],

Great Spotted Woodpecker *parroti* [only Corsica; large, long-billed, ears and unders dark brownish to fawn, vent slightly deeper red],

Wren *koenigi* [more barred, extending onto mantle and higher up to breast, purer white below],

Mistle Thrush *deichleri* [also Maghreb, sometimes Corsican and Sardinian separated as *reiseri*; lower pitch sound, paler and greyer, in NW Africa also longer bills],

Blackcap *paulucii* [also Italy, Tunisia; smaller and much darker grey unders, less extensive white unders, female paler rufous cap],

Coal Tit *sardus* [brownier on flanks but similar to nominate],

Great Tit *corsus* [also in S Iberia; probably slightly greyer above and paler yellow below than in NW Europe],

Long-tailed Tit *irbii* [also in S Iberia] [in *alpinus* group, not in *caudatus* & *europaeus* groups; possibly, to be split in two or three species],

Chaffinch *tyrrhenica* [only in Corsica, *sardus* in Sardinia has different colour of under parts, both short-winged],

Greenfinch *madaraszi* [small, dark, extensively green],

Goldfinch *tchusii* [also in Sicily; small size, bill smaller, uppers darker, ears brown, belly not cinnamon but olive-brown],

Jay *corsicanus* [only in Corsica; like nominate but darker and colours more saturated],

Hooded Crow *sardonius* [usually synonym of nominate],

Cirl Bunting *nigrostriata* [50% slightly more heavily streaked black on flanks; usually considered monotypic]