

CORSICA – May 2005

30.04.2005 – 04.05.2005

Dave Bird + Sven Goethals

Contact: dave.bird@able-halle.de

Travel details:

Flight: EasyJet Berlin Schönefeld to Pisa 60€

Ferry: Corsica Ferries, Livorno/Italy-Bastia/Corsica 52€

Hire car: Budget in Bastia - 5 days – 130€

Itinerary:

Friday 29th April	Travel to Livorno
Saturday 30 th April	Ferry 08.15 arrive Bastia 12.15 Pick up hire car 14.00 (Budget-Port de Toga) Afternoon birding – Etang de Biguglia Afternoon/evening drive to + go birding in Haut Asco area Camp near haut Asco
Sunday 1 st May	Birding in Haut Asco area Lunchtime drive to Vivario/Vizzavona area + bird(south of Corte) Camp north of Aleira
Monday 2 nd May	Birding Etang de Bilungia Drive to Cap Corse and go birding in the area Camp near Cap Grosso
Tuesday 3 rd May	Birding in Cap Corse area Evening seawatch – Cape Grosso Camp near Cap Grosso
Wednesday 4 th May	Early morning birding - Etang de Biguglia Return hire car ca. 11.30 Ferry to Livorno 13.30 arrive 17.30

30.04.05

Ferry crossing

Left Livorno at 08.15.

In the harbour a number of Mediterranean Gulls were present ca.20, plus Pallid Swifts and a single Hoopoe.

The crossing was relatively quiet, up to 5 Scopoli's Shearwaters, Sunfish and dolphins were seen.

Corsica

Arrived at 12.15.

First visited Etang de Bilungia just to the south of Bastia. First birds included 20 Flamingos, 2 Spoonbill, Fan-tailed/Cetti's/Reed Warblers, Spotless Starlings, 200+ Yellow-legged Gulls, and a very big Locust.

From here we drove into the mountains to Haut Asco.

From the car park we headed off to the left on one of the mountain trails. After ca. 250-500m we found a pair of Corsican Nuthatches. The birds were breeding in a dead Corsican Pine.

Camped, 2/3 km down the valley in the first campsite we came to. Nobody was present, so it was for free. Scops Owl calling at night.

01.05.05

From the car park at Haut Asco we walked up the ski slope area at first light, upto ca. 2000m. In this area we found Corsican Citril Finches, Crossbills. Alpine Choughs, Alpine Swifts, Blue Rock Thrush were seen flying around the mountain sides.

The pair of Nuthatches performed well again, 3 Lammergeiers flew over.

We then headed south of Corte to an area between Vivario and Vizzavona. Near a café on the N193 (at the junction to the D69) south of Vivario we found good areas for Mamora's and Dartford Warblers as well as Cirl Buntings. We then travelled down the D69 until we found a dirt track that went off to the right after ca. 2.5-3km. A lot of the forest in the area had been burnt presumably through forest fires. The area around this track was largely intact. A short walk along this track gave at least 3 pairs of Corsican Nuthatches, incredible views, Corsican Citril Finches and Crossbills.

The evening saw us down on the coast at Aleira. It was clear that many birds were on the move, 100's of Bee-eaters among a host of migrants.

Proper campsite used north of Aleira.

02.05.05

Visited Etang de Bilungia first thing, Flamingos still present as was a Hobby. Migrants much in evidence.

From here we drove to Cap Corse. Our first destination was Macinaggio. From here we found a new track towards Iles Finocchiarola. Parked at a centre then walked towards the islands. Here according to "World Birdwatch/and other publications" breed ca. 85 pairs of Audouin's Gulls. We saw no birds whatsoever, only an island covered in Yellow-legged Gulls, rather disappointing really. Lots of migrants were seen here, Whinchats, Wheatears, flava wagtails, pipits. Next onto the north coast at Barcaggio, an adult Audouin's Gull flew past us at a small restaurant. From here we seawatched looking towards Ile de la Giraglia, up to 10 Audouin's Gulls were seen feeding in front of the island and flying along the coast, as well as 2 Scopoli's Shearwaters. We drove on towards Cap Grosso. As we approached a valley with some bushes and a small stream with running water 2 Booted Eagles flew over, many migrants were also seen in this valley. A seawatch in the evening produced nothing only a Red-legged Partridge and Peregrine, good numbers of Bee-eaters, Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers. Camped on the headland.

03.05.05

Seawatched at first light from the headland, about 20 Yelkouan and 2 Scopoli's Shearwaters gave good views. Driving back up the valley 3 Red-footed Falcons were resting on a telegraph pole, ♂♀+imm plus another booted Eagle. At 09.00 we reached Macinaggio it was then obvious a major rush of migrants were underway, 9 Booted Eagles, 22 Honey Buzzards, 7 Red-footed Falcons, 2 Marsh Harriers, 1000's hirundines, Whinchats, Turtle Doves. Later at Barcaggio an adult Audouin's Gull landed on the rocks just in front of us, 10 Yelkouan shearwaters flew past. From here at least 10 ♀ type Marsh Harriers were present and a ♂ Montagu's Harrier flew through. Back in the valley about 17.00 30 Honey Buzzards drifted over and out to sea. A walk towards the lighthouse produced Osprey, Mamora's and Icterine Warbler. At night Quail, Nightjar were heard.

04.05.05

10 Scopoli's and 3 Yelkouan Shearwaters were seen first thing. At a small marsh in Macinaggio there were 2 Wood Sandpipers. Our final stop on Corsica was at Etang de Bilungia and this time 2 Audouin's Gulls were seen on the posts at the northern end of the lake. The return journey back to Livorno by ferry was very quiet, we missed seeing a large whale.