

A Tiny trip to Tuscany

26th May - 2nd June 2015



Introduction

A holiday with the wife with mix of touristy things in Florence (3 days) and some wildlife targets in the Tuscan countryside (3 days). I indulged in countless ice creams but only one portions of fried potatoes during the trip and there were no problems or incidents on the trip for a change.

The wildlife was targeted to a few species; I was not after a large list, so we spent lots of time on these few specific targets and on visiting some reserves for general wildlife watching and some touristy visiting along the way. We missed a couple of targets but on the whole the trip was very successful.

Our hire car a Fiat Punto was excellent despite its terrible turning circle.

Temperatures were high upper 20's to low 30's during the day and high teens at night and it only rained briefly as we arrived.

The photos are hyperlinked to larger versions.

Diary

26th May 2015

We flew in to Florence airport in torrential rain and took a taxi to the hotel situated on the river. The rain stopped and we headed up to the Fort, plenty of birds along the river including a nice **serin** and **night heron**. At the Fort a nice male **redstart** was seen and a brown rat along the river.

27th May 2015

The morning was touristy but the afternoon we crossed the river and headed to some of the green areas. There were a few lizards and some butterflies.

28th May 2015

A trip to Sienna and several vineyards produced a few butterflies but not much else.

29th May 2015

After a leisurely start we headed to the airport to collect the hire car. This went smoothly and we soon took the Punto towards Lucca, we revisited a site I visited several years ago for **Red billed Leothrix** and it was not long along the riverside path before we found them at least a dozen in a short time. Further along the river we checked out the **crag martin** colony locating a nice **penduline tit** along the way. Onwards to another revisit to Lake Massaciuccoli where we wandered down the reserve boardwalk a **purple heron** the best bird and some nice ice cream being sold in the car park. We drove round the back roads picking up **bee eaters**, **red backed shrike**, **red avadavat** and some of the commoner species before heading south to where we were staying for the next couple of days. We arrived a little before dusk spotting a **coypu** in the lake as we arrived. The place we were staying at was excellent and after we settled in we did a short night drive. It was quite productive 5 **badgers**, 3 **foxes**, a few **roe deer** and a couple of **hares**.



Palazzo Vecchio



Red Billed Leothrix



Bee eater



Purple Heron



Edible Frog

30th May 2015

We started at the Ortobello WWF visitor centre, which we knew would be shut as would be most of the reserve but the gardens were open and they had plenty of wildlife in but the surprise was a **bald ibis**, this was ringed and we found details of the reintroduction project this was one that never migrated north and was quite content feeding in the fields and gardens, it was reasonable wary and flew when we got too close. There were plenty of dragonflies and butterflies and a pair of **spotted flycatchers** were flycatching and a pair of **bee eaters** were bee eating. A warden arrived and tried to tell us that the reserve was closed but we managed to communicate that we were happy in the garden and he was OK with that. We finished our wander round and headed to the part of the reserve that was open. **Black winged stilts** and **Caspian tern** on the lagoon and plenty of lizards but not much else. We drove round picking up the common species and bumping into **hoopoe** and **coypu** along the way. We stopped in the picturesque town of Talamone in the late afternoon for an ice cream and wander round before exploring the area around Maremma National Park. We located a hay field that had just been cut and was full of **deer** and we noted the location for later. We drove the road at dusk easily finding **red fox** and **wild boar** and a **scops owl** as the light faded. We began a night drive down all the back roads in the area quickly clocking up several **hares**, a **wild boar** a **fox** and a few **roe deer**, before the lamp failed, it was the bulb and fortunately I had a spare but had neglected to pack a screwdriver. A quick rummage in the Punto and a screwdriver was located, the bulb changed and we were back in action – phew.

We returned to the hay field. It was alive with wildlife a **wild boar**, **roe** and **fallow deer**, a **beech marten** and a **fox**. But my attention was a creature at the extreme range of the lamp a **porcupine**, it had to be on the shape and compared to everything else, but it was just on the edge to be 100% sure but we changed angles and eventually we got slightly better views in the bins it stayed for a short while ambling at the back of the field before disappearing into the scrub. We continued our drive with more of the same until in an olive grove we had something again at the limit of the lamp (I must invest in a more powerful one.



Wild Boar



Small Flowered Tongue Orchid



Asp Viper



Hermann's Tortoise



Italian Sparrow

The trees made this harder to confirm it was another **porcupine** and eventually we lost it and that was our cue to head for home

31st May 2015

We had arranged a visit to Bosco Rocconi WWF reserve and after driving down a long track reached the car park where a guide was waiting but not for us. Fortunately his colleague spoke English and they were not expecting us despite our reservation letter and after some discussion on the phone we were added to the birdwatching group which now had finally turned up. We took a walk up through the woodland to the mountain hide, but the Lanner falcons were nowhere to be seen. There was plenty of interest, **lizard orchids**, **tongue orchids** and plenty of butterflies, dragon and damselflies, beetles and more but very few birds which was a surprise. We wandered down the gorge into a dry river bed where there were several pools full of tadpoles and plenty of dragonflies about. Further down a stream was still running and was full of fish and yet more dragonflies, here we stopped for lunch. We continued up to some woodland meadows where I stopped to photograph a butterfly and spotted an **asp viper**. After a stop at a pond for frogs and damselflies we headed back to the car park, Anna spotted a **Hermann's tortoise** which was the final thing of note as we reached the car park and we bid farewell to the group and headed into Roccalbegna for cold drinks and ice cream. Suitably refreshed we headed for a drive up Mont Amiata stopping at several points to visit meadows mainly for butterflies, but we also spotted **red deer**, **red fox**, **cicada's** and a **raven** and a pond had **Italian crested newts**. We assisted a family who had got a long way from their car who were most grateful.

We headed back to Roccalbegna for a wander and then for an excellent local meal in a pizzeria. We headed back to where we were staying a few roe deer seen on the route back. We did a night drive for a few hours in the area where we were staying, we found the **badger** family once more and several **common toads**, **brown hares**, **red foxes** and **roe deer** and a nice **scops owl** and took one last look at the fireflies before we called it a night.



Cicada



Bald Ibis



Little Egret



Lizard Orchid



Glanville Fritillary

1st June 2015

We spent the day visiting some of the local villages and doing a bit of birdwatching in between. The first bird of note was a **roller** on the wires on the way to Magliano. The village was alive with **swifts** and they had provided plenty of purpose built nest sites for them which was great to see, it was very hot so ice creams and drinks were regularly taken. Another local village Montiano had some nesting **house martins** at head height which were good for photographs, but being Monday this village was closed so we headed further afield in search of lunch. During our drive round we added a **short toed eagle** complete with snake. We ended up in Pereta for lunch and after lunch we visited a picturesque cemetery overlooking the valleys. This had plenty of **common wall lizards** and several butterflies, **southern comma** and **nettle tree butterfly** of note. We headed back to our accommodation and spent a couple hours relaxing by the pool and taking a swim. Early evening I headed down to the lake to stake out the **coypu**, a family of which were already feeding by the bank, I flushed them but I hid behind a convenient hay bale and they soon returned and I got some excellent photos of the family, a golden oriole. We headed out to Magliano where I finally managed to get some French fries the first of the trip to accompany my pizza. Then it was the final night drive which was the least productive of the lot a **bank vole** was new but mostly the same common species as previous evenings.

2nd June 2015

After breakfast we had an uneventful drive back to the airport and flew home.



Roe Deer



Red Fox



Roller



House Martin



Firefly

Species Lists

Birds - 89

Black Crowned Night Heron	Cattle Egret	Little Egret
Grey Heron	Purple Heron	Sacred Ibis
Spoonbill	Mallard	Muscovy Duck
Short Toed Eagle	Montagu's Harrier	Buzzard
Kestrel	Peregrine	Pheasant
Water Rail	Moorhen	Coot
Black Winged Stilt	Lapwing	Curlew
Black Headed Gull	Yellow Legged Gull	Caspian Tern
Rock Dove	Woodpigeon	Stock Dove
Collared Dove	Turtle Dove	Cuckoo
Tawny Owl	Scops Owl	Nightjar
Swift	Hoopoe	Bee eater
Roller	Great Spotted Woodpewcker	Green Woodpecker
Crag Martin	Barn Swallow	House Martin
White Wagtail	Yellow Wagtail	Grey Wagtail
Wren	Dunnock	Robin
Nightingale	Redstart	Blackbird
Blackcap	Garden Warbler	Whitethroat
Sedge Warbler	Zitting Cisticola	Reed Warbler
Cetti's Warbler	Melodious Warbler	Chiff Chaff
Firecrest	Spotted Flycatcher	Great Tit
Blue Tit	Long Tailed tit	Penduline Tit
Nuthatch	Short Toed Treecreeper	Red Backed Shrike
Magpie	Skylark	Jay
Hooded Crow	Jackdaw	Raven
Starling	Golden Oriole	House Sparrow
Italian Sparrow	Chaffinch	Linnet
Goldfinch	Greenfinch	Reed Bunting
Yellowhammer	Cirl Bunting	Corn Bunting
Red Avadavat	Red Billed Leothrix	

Mammals - 15

Hedgehog	Red Fox	Badger
Wild Boar	Roe Deer	Fallow Deer
Porcupine	Coypu	Brown Rat
Bank Vole	Mouse sp	Brown Hare
Serotine	Pip sp	Beech Marten

Insects – 44

Meadow Brown	Spotted Fritillary	Glanville Fritillary
Pearly Heath	Southern Comma	High Brown Fritillary
Idas Blue	Nettle Tree Butterfly	Clouded Yellow
Painted Lady	Marbled White	Large White
Small Heath	Large Skipper	Cleopatra
Small White	Red Admiral	Green Veined White
Swallowtail	Scarce Swallowtail	
Moth 1	Moth 2	Moth 3
Burnet Moth	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	
4 Spot Chase	Emperor	Copper Demoiselle
Azure Damselfly	Common Blue Damselfly	Dainty Damselfly
Blue tailed damselfly	Large Red damselfly	Broad bodied chaser
Variable damselfly	Mediterranean bluet	Emerald sp
Bug 1	Bug 2	Beetle
Cicada	Firefly	Balkan Emerald

Herps - 11

Common Toad	Agile Frog	Common Wall Lizard
Italian Wall Lizard	Italian Pool Frog	Asp Viper
Italian Crested Newt	Hermann's Tortoise	Moorish Gecko
Western Whipsnake*	Western Green Lizard	Edible Frog

* Dead

