

## Spending a week with migrating birds in isola di Ponza

posted on [May 17, 2017](#) by [derhuuu](#)

<https://attheimperialsteps.wordpress.com/2017/05/17/spending-a-week-with-migrating-birds-in-isola-di-ponza/>

Since beginning of my studies I've been interested about birds. You can imagine how pleased I was attending Bird Migration Research course, where I got a chance to spend one week just observing and working with them! This surely was an amazing experience and also great opportunity to travel to Italy. Two birds with one stone so to say, haha!

In total we spend one week in Poza, which is an island near to Italy's west coast. More specific we stayed in the bird ringing station. The ringing station has been active since 2002 and Ponza itself is used as a stopover site by thousands of songbirds, which makes it a great place to study bird migration! For this reason, our aim was to learn about the subject in general and of course obtain many other skills considering, for instance, how to handle birds and identify them. There were only 4 students attending the course from Vienna, a cozy small group so to say.





The whole research group consisted instead mainly of people from Italy and Austria (Universität Wien), but there were also some volunteers working with us. Even though I enjoyed working in international team, sometimes I found it quite exhausting that you had to co-operate with four different languages (Italy, English, German and Finnish only for me) when trying to learn species.

Days were normally long, like it always happens to be in field courses. We started always at 8:00 and normally called it a day at 18–19:00. Sometimes thought, we worked until 20:00, because after dawn it was time for the last net round, in order not to leave any birds there for a night. In the contrast, we also had days with really low bird activity and had still many chances to enjoy our staying.







Clemens and Simon doing some serious brain work between net rounds

Days included always checking the bird nets with others and bringing birds for the ringers from the hill, where all the bird nets were located. In addition, we also helped research teams with their studies including collecting birds for them, taking samples, collecting data and doing behaviour survey in garden warbler (*Sylvia borin*) experiments.

The course itself was a great opportunity to learn and train bird handling plus get also used to work with them in field conditions. In addition, I got to see many species that I have never comforted before! For example, bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), European turtle-dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) and woodchat shrike (*Lanius senator*) were super cool

species to see! Just take a look of the pics and you will understand. We also witnessed migration of group of ten honey buzzards (*Pernis apivorus*)!

















In general, Ponza is really beautiful island where for instance political people had been exiled back in the history. For me though, this doesn't seem to be too bad place to be in an exile... Weather was warm and sunny in every day. Even though I already got colour, I still had to be careful not to burn myself. As a Finn I also felt sometimes that spending long days outside in the sun really sucked my energy and nap times were highly appreciated in hottest hours.



Last golden hour and sunset were perfect!



Can't complain about views we had in net rounds!

We also had a specious apartment with a really great view to the ocean. Just a perfect place to have a breakfast or dinner between work. Every evening locals and people



from ringing station gathered together to have a drink and play table football in local bar *Marlie's*. In one day there was not really happening a lot so the others send us to have a swim to the beach. Water was amazingly blue, but quite chilly. This didn't still prevent us for having a swim and it was really refreshing! We spend quite a while on the beach by jumping from the cliff and just enjoying the sun. I never thought that university life would be this exhausting...









Now that the course is over, it was quite sad to leave Ponza behind, even though bird activity was quite bad. Normally they catch around 1000-2000 individuals per day and we had only 30-50. People were also really worried about this fact and if it's affecting on big scale to migration. However, I had such a great week with nice people and it's good to get back with many new memories!