



a million
voices for
nature



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D. Francesc Antich i Oliver
Sr. President del Govern de les Illes Balears
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SPAIN

20 April 2010

Dear Sir

In the last few months, the RSPB has been receiving dozens of letters and emails from our members, and other Spanish organisations, about the worrying situation evolving in Mallorca at Son Bosc. The RSPB has over one million members, many of whom travel to Mallorca on holiday. The letters complain about the destruction of habitat that happened at Son Bosc last month, and the planned construction of a golf course.

I would like to express our grave concern about the possibility that the unique and outstanding natural heritage of this site may be lost due to the ongoing construction of a golf course. This could lead not only to irreversible loss of biodiversity, but also to long term impacts on the hydrology of the whole area, including the s'Albufera Natural Park, which has been classified as a Ramsar site and a Natura 2000 area.

As you know, Son Bosc includes unique and invaluable biodiversity, most (60-80%) of the European population of the orchid *Orchis robusta* (in Europe this species only occurs in the area of s'Albufera), the biggest breeding colony in Mallorca of the bee eater (*Merops apiaster*), and is also a very important feeding area for the Eleonora's falcon (*Falco eleonora*). Its dune grassland habitat is unique, and very rare in Mallorca and in Europe, and therefore merits the highest level of protection.

The area is one of the most sought after sites in the island by walkers, and its spring flower-rich meadows are the most valued landscapes by tourists, many of them our members. Many birdwatchers also go there to see the Eleonora's falcons at close quarters, feeding on flying beetles on summer evenings, and to watch the bee eaters. The s'Albufera Park already draws a quarter of a million visitors per year. Therefore, the protection of Son Bosc makes economic as well as environmental sense.



We strongly congratulate your decision last February to develop a management plan (PORN) for the area in and around the Parque Natural s'Albufera, including part of Son Bosc, which amounts to a provisional measure to protect the zone. The RSPB would like to see Son Bosc included in the Parque Natural de s'Albufera and/or classified as a Natura 2000 site. Indeed, this was the situation in 2003, but an unfortunate decision taken later, meant that this area was subsequently removed.

We are very concerned about the attempts, taken to the Balearic Parliament, at continuing with the construction of the golf course, for which there is a licence since 2008. In particular, the recent approval of regional interest status for the golf course is worrying and deplorable. Given that there are already 24 golf courses in Mallorca, and many others planned, the choice here is between one more golf course or a unique, vital piece of biodiversity and natural heritage.

Given its conservation importance, the future of this site extends beyond the Balearic region and Spain, and is of concern to all Europeans.

The RSPB would like to extend our support to make sure that this rich part of the Balearic Islands and Europe is not lost forever.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Tim Stowe
Director, International Operations

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