

News Round up September issue Coastal & Inland

Contributed by Samantha Kett

Woman spends the night in the sea after falling from boat A WOMAN who spent an entire night in the sea after she fell out of the yacht she was sailing with her husband swam ashore the next day unhurt.

Red Cross and coastguard rescuers abandoned their search at around 04.30hrs last Wednesday morning, some ten hours after the Ukrainian woman, 55, fell in the water near Dénia.

But just after 10.00hrs, she swam into Dénia's Almadrava beach.

She was met by her relieved husband, a German national, who reported that she was 'tired and asking for water' but otherwise in perfect health.

Bull drowns during fiestas in Jávea A TERRIFIED bull who hurled himself into the sea during a festival in Jávea died in spite of his owners' efforts to revive him.

Organisers managed to pull the animal onto dry land, but his head had become submerged and he had swallowed too much water.

The bull, from a ranch in Paiporta, was taking part in a bous embolats event for the first time.

This is where fireworks are tied to the bulls' horns, and they are run through the streets.

It formed part of the Loreto fiestas in Jávea last week.

The bull's death is bound to cause controversy among those who want to see these events banned on the grounds of cruelty to animals and danger to the public.

Forest fires in L'Atzúvia and Pedreguer

SIX aeroplanes were needed to put out a forest fire in L'Atzúvia (near Pego) on Thursday.

Emergency services were alerted just after 16.30hrs when the blaze broke out near a pine forest.

Although fairly close to a residential area, it was not necessary to evacuate the inhabitants, and no injuries or damage to property were caused.

The following day – Friday – another inferno broke out near the Monte Pedreguer urbanisation on the road linking Líber with Gata de Gorgos.

Emergency services were called out at around 18.30hrs and were forced to work through the night to bring the flames under control.

Although nobody needed to be evacuated, worried residents on Monte Pedreguer left their homes and stood watching the fire, fearing for the safety of their property.

Given that this is the second fire to have occurred in the same place and that the previous one was the work of an arsonist, firefighters believe the latest blaze had been started deliberately.

Dénia, Jávea, Teulada and Pedreguer a wash-out

WITH the bright sunshine and sweltering climes along the coast at present, it is hard to believe that just a week ago most of the Marina Alta was underwater.

A whopping 18 litres of rainfall per square metre was seen in Dénia on Saturday, and the downpour was so heavy in Teulada that the annual Moscatel festival – to mark the harvest of the district's famous wine-grape – had to be called off.

Jávea and Pedreguer were also a wash-out.

But just a few miles north, in La Safor, Oliva and Gandia merely experienced a drizzle and a slight drop in temperature, providing a temporary respite from the punishing heat.

The summer of 2009 is said to have been one of the hottest in 40 years.

Castellón news Driver without a licence caught twice on the same day

A MOTORIST from Vila-real has been arrested twice in the same day for driving without a licence.

He was firstly caught by the Local Police in Almassora in his Citroën Berlingo, but they released him pending trial after taking his statement.

Yet just a few hours later, on Saturday, the Guardia Civil caught the motorist, 34, in the same van on a different street in Almassora.

He was immediately arrested.

Animal charity 'cannot find homes for its dogs in Spain'

AN animal sanctuary in Vinaròs says it is having to send its dogs to Germany to find loving homes – because Spanish people only want healthy pedigrees.

One of the volunteers at the Asociación Protectora de Animales El Cau says their latest acquisition, a five-month-old puppy called Berni, is paralysed in his back legs after having been run over by a car.

The clever little creature has devised his own way of moving around – almost as rapidly as a healthy dog – and is a content and happy pooch.

But they will be forced to send him to a sanctuary for sick and injured dogs in Germany, with whom they have contact, in order for him to find a home.

'A dog like Berni could make owners every bit as happy as a 'normal' animal, and be as good if not better company.

'But the lack of awareness in Spanish society means we have to find alternatives, such as having our dogs adopted abroad.

'Spanish dog-owners mainly seek pedigrees and tend to buy them rather than taking them from sanctuaries.'

Another volunteer, a woman from Benicarló, says she grew up with her mother collecting dogs abandoned in the street

and taking them to Germany to find homes.

The owner of the Can Pou de L'&Olla dog stud farm, who also takes in rescued animals, says most of his refugees are adopted by foreigners – either in Spain or abroad.

He says many of his German clients take abandoned animals he has rescued back to their country and find adoptive homes for them.

“In Germany, they don't tend to buy dogs – they adopt rescued ones,” reveals Can Pou's owner.

Card-cloning shop-owner faces trial

A YOUNG man who amassed more than 50,000 euros in cloned credit cards could face six years in prison.

The accused, 22, who owns a home decoration shop in Castellón, is said to have copied the magnetic bands on the credit cards with the help of a gang he became involved with in 2003.

He is said to have made up to 36 ‘fictitious’ purchases using a point-of-sale machine from the CAM bank, and forged signatures on the receipts.

As a result of this, it was the CAM bank which were charged for the purchases, a sum totaling nearly 50,000 euros.

The cards came from various financial institutions all over Europe, mostly from France, including BNP Paribas, Cr dit Lyonnais and Soci t  G n rales, as well as from Citibank and Westminster Bank, the BBVA and Bancaja.

If found guilty, he could face a six-year jail sentence and be forced to pay the CAM bank the money he has allegedly defrauded from them, plus interest and legal costs.

Marina d’Or flat out with holidaymakers

MARINA d’Or holiday village and spa was overwhelmingly popular with tourists this August, say managers.

The world-renowned luxury resort in Oropesa del Mar continued to attract thousands of holidaymakers this summer, despite the recession.

In fact, 90 per cent of its rooms were fully booked.

July saw eight in 10 spaces filled, meaning that in both months, Marina d’Or saw a rise of more than 10 per cent on last year’s bookings for the same period.

The complex, which three, four and five star hotels, expects to be fully booked throughout September.

Its most popular hotels have been its four-star centre; the brand-new three-star Hotel Gran Duque, and the five-star Marina d’Or hotel and spa.

Four more ‘illegal’ homes to be demolished in Ontinyent A FURTHER four houses are earmarked for demolition in the rural outskirts of Ontinyent.

Already, 13 homes in the country area around the town were due to be demolished over allegations that they had been built without the requisite planning permission.

Now, according to mayoress Lina Insa, another four have come to light.

She has announced that the demolition costs will be passed on to the owners, builders or developers.

Insa has also revealed that the local government may take civil court action against the promoters of these properties for having built them ‘illegally’.

The houses are due to come down within two months, and the mayoress has ordered that the electricity and water supply to these homes be cut off by this coming weekend.

Alzira man in intensive care with swine ‘flu A NEW case of swine ‘flu has been reported in the region, with a 35-year-old man in a critical condition being treated in Alzira.

He was admitted earlier this week to La Ribera hospital’s intensive care unit.

In the meantime, a 27-year-old girl remains in intensive care in Requena hospital, where her condition is said to be serious but stable.

Speeding motorists receive ‘up to 19 fines a day’ A SPEED camera on the X tiva-Genov s road has led to 500 fines being dished out in Genov s alone in the first month since its installation.

Mayor Emilio Llopis complains that some drivers have had between four and 19 fine notices since July, and that the number of sanctions received by the village’s motorists is more than one sixth of the population of 2,800.

Llopis says up to 60 penalty letters arrive daily in Genov s from the ministry of traffic, and that drivers are now living in fear of opening their letter boxes.

The camera – which is hidden from view and was set up unannounced in July – is located on a 300-metre stretch of the CV-610 leading up to a sharp bend.

This bend is known locally as the ‘curva de la mitja hora’, since drivers say they feel as though they spend half an hour steering round it.

A spokeswoman for the DGT for the province of Valencia, Mar a Dolores P rez, denies that the speed trap was installed to amass money for the government.

It has already been vandalised once, in protest, but was since repaired.

Olocau forest fire wipes out 20 hectares AN inferno that broke out between Olocau and Marines on Friday lunchtime wiped out a whopping 20 hectares of mountainside, emergency services reveal.

Firefighters were called out at around 14.20hrs, and it took them nearly six hours to bring the flames under control.

It then continued to burn for several days.

Five hydroplanes and four fire engines were needed to tackle the blaze.

Fortunately, nobody was hurt and no damage to property recorded.

Airports for Ll ria and the Vall d’Albaida? PLANS have been put forward for two new airports in inland parts of the region.

Already under consideration were proposals for a terminal in the Vall d'Albaida, meaning this would be exactly halfway between the airports of Valencia and Alicante and provide hundreds of jobs for a rural area that suffers from a high unemployment rate.

But the latest project on the table is for an airport in Lliria, which would be called Ciudad del Aire ('air city') and have a slightly longer runway.

Both plans include residential complexes in the vicinity and possibly private hangars.

The airports may not be for tourism purposes, however.

Plans presented are for small-sized terminals for general and executive aviation and privately-owned planes.

Torrent-Lliria trains to run more frequently

NEW timetables and more trains between Torrent and Lliria were launched on Monday, reveals the railway boards. Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat Valenciana (FGV) says the metro on Line 1 will now be much more frequent along this stretch.

The timetable changes only affect working days, when trains will run every 15 minutes during the rush hours in the morning, lunchtime and at night.

At other times of the day, trains will run every 30 minutes.

The first train to Valencia from Torrent Avinguda will now leave at 04.37hrs, and from Lliria, at 05.54hrs.

Copies of the new timetable are now available at information points at all the stations along the route.

Back to school costs a bomb CHILDREN'S return to school this month has cost the average parent in the region nearly a thousand euros per pupil.

A survey by the Federation of Independent Consumers (FUCI) has revealed that for each child, their parents will spend 913 euros on clothes, shoes, textbooks, canteen fees, school buses and other expenses associated with the start of the new term.

Kids who go to private schools cost around 1,310 euros each, and those in state schools a minimum of 540 euros.

FUCI reveals that in the Comunidad Valenciana, the costs are the third-highest in the country, after Madrid (an average of 1,007 euros per child) and Catalunya (1,000 euros).

The average for Spain - 772 euros - represents a fall of 6.4 per cent on last year, with parents cutting corners where they can due to the recession.

This includes attempting to re-use last year's school bags, folders, pens and notebooks where they can.

British Museum's Disc-Thrower attracts thousands to MARQ NEARLY 125,000 people have been to Alicante's MARQ to see the Disc-Thrower since it was taken on loan from the British Museum this summer.

In just five months since the exhibition La belleza del cuerpo ('the beauty of the body') was officially opened by Queen Sofia, the statue's popularity has been overwhelming.

The ancient Greek figure, by Mirón, has mainly attracted people from Alicante, Valencia, Murcia and Albacete, but others have come all the way from Madrid, Andalucía, Castilla y León and Catalunya.

A significant number of visitors have come from abroad, particularly from France, the UK, the USA, Italy and Germany, in that order.

This is the Disc-Thrower's second overseas trip from the British Museum in two years, since it was on display in Shanghai and Hong Kong to promote the Peking Olympic games.

The 1.7-metre statue, which is made from 700 kilos of marble, will be on show in Alicante's archaeological museum (MARQ) until October 13.

Average first-time buyer in Spain is 33 - but in the UK they are 34

FIRST-TIME property buyers in Spain are now younger than those in the UK.

Recent research by a leading estate agency has revealed that people in Spain tend to buy their first home at the age of 33, whereas last year they were aged 35.

Those behind the study say this shows that house prices are coming down to a sensible level and that Spanish kids are more keen to become independent.

Buyers in Catalunya - and particularly Barcelona - are the youngest in the country, with the average person to sign for their first mortgage being aged 30.

Surprisingly, Madrid is at the opposite end of the scale where first-time buyers remain aged 35.

Aragón has seen a drop from age 36 to 32, and those buying their first home in the Balearic Islands are aged around 31. This compares to 34 in the Canary Islands.

The Comunidad Valenciana and Murcia are exactly in the middle, with first-time buyers being aged 33 in general.

In the UK, however, research by mortgage lenders has shown that since 1979, the average age of a first-time buyer has gone up from 27 to 34.

If the trend continues, by the year 2039, nobody will be on the property ladder until the age of 41, meaning they are likely to have to work for many years beyond state retirement age in order to pay off crippling mortgages.

At present, 40 per cent of all new mortgages signed for in Britain involve first-time buyers.

Heart patients, diabetics and the obese - must - get swine - flu jab

VACCINATIONS against swine - flu are strongly advised for anyone with heart conditions, diabetes, or other ongoing chronic illnesses, says Spain's minister for health.

According to Trinidad Jiménez, cancer patients should see their doctor about the AH1N1 jab, and that this is even more necessary if they are undergoing chemotherapy.

But also, anyone with a long-term heart problem - such as angina or heart failure - or who has ever had a heart attack or a bypass should get injected, as should those with Type 1 or 2 diabetes.

At present, there is insufficient medication in circulation to warrant vaccinating the entire population, but high-risk cases

are being given priority.

This includes the clinically-obese – those with a BMI of 40 or more – plus anyone who has had their spleen removed, suffers from asthma, kidney failure, severe anaemia, liver problems, or any other respiratory condition. These recommendations are particularly important where the person is under 18 or over 60.

The annual jab for seasonal influenza provides no protection whatsoever against swine ‘flu, the ministry of health stresses.

British man killed in hotel car park attack

A BRITISH tourist lost his life after a brutal attack in Magalluf (Mallorca) last month, the foreign office has recently confirmed.

Anthony Charnock, 44, a plumber from Lincolnshire, is said to have been involved in a fight in the car park of his hotel. He was hit on the head with a baseball bat, say police.

The causes of the fight and Mr Charnock’s exact involvement have not been revealed, but his friends in the UK say he was ‘kind, funny and genuine’, ‘got along with everyone’, and ‘would never go looking for trouble’.

Mr Charnock was hospitalised on August 29, but died on September 2 after having been in a coma for three days. His family, who had flown to Mallorca, were by his side when he died.

Brad Pitt seen in northern Spain

BRAD Pitt has been in Spain recently to visit the futuristic new theatre and auditorium being built in Avilés (Asturias). The centre, which will be on the scale of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or Valencia’s City of Arts and Sciences, will include indoor and outdoor venues for cultural activities such as music and drama.

Angelina Jolie’s and Jennifer Anniston’s ex was particularly keen to see the building in Avilés, since he hopes to draw inspiration from it for a project he is involved in reconstructing New Orleans where it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

The star was interested to see that the cultural centre, the work of ultra-modern architect Óscar Niemeyer, is under construction in the port area of Avilés, which has been more or less abandoned since the 1950s when its steel trade came to an end.

This urban facelift is hoped to achieve the same results as the Guggenheim Centre did in Bilbao – once a gloomy, grey, and gritty industrial metropolis, the Basque city is now a cultural capital.

Oscar Niemeyer’s other work includes most of Brazil’s hi-tech, modern capital, Brasilia, and a museum in Niteroi (near Río de Janeiro) shaped like a flying saucers.

But Brad Pitt’s tour of northern Spain did not stop at Avilés.

He and film director Quentin Tarantino brought a touch of glitz to the world-famous San Sebastián cinema festival this month, where they were promoting their new work.

The film, Inglourious Basterds (sic) features Pitt as a Nazi-killing commander.

British bullfighter is back: But has this controversial blood sport had its day?

A BRITISH bullfighter has returned to the ring at the age of 67, four years after a knee operation and heart surgery forced him to hang up his red cape.

The expatriate matador, Frank Evans – known in the ring as El Inglés (‘the Englishman’) has been fighting bulls on and off since the 1960s.

A twenty-year spell in England, during which he made his living from conventional jobs, convinced him more and more that his future lie in the bull-rings of Spain.

His comeback was in Benalmádena (Málaga) last week, where the audience were mostly British tourists.

But not everyone is behind Evans’ passionate drive to continue his career until “you see me with a walking stick, then I’ll be convinced it’s time to stop.”

The closest friend of the late footballing legend George Best is keen to hang onto a sport that is dying out in popularity in Spain.

Most Spanish young adults condemn the sport as cruel, and say that even their parents are beginning to agree with them that bullfighting is distasteful.

A pressure group in Santa Pola wants to see bull-running banned in the town’s annual patron saint fiestas on the grounds of cruelty to animals and danger to spectators.

An uproar was caused in Jávea a week ago when a bull drowned in the sea after taking fright during a bous embolats parade, where lit sparklers are attached to the animals’ horns.

The controversy even made the silver screen when the autobiography of Spain’s most famous matador was made into a film starring Penélope Cruz and Adrian Brody.

But when she was chosen for the part in Manolete, Cruz insisted she would only accept it if the producers signed a contract declaring that no animals would be harmed during filming.

Kids under 14 ‘too young to be criminals’

SPAIN’s central government has refused to lower the age of criminal responsibility for children from 14 to 12.

At present, any child aged under 14 who commits a crime – however serious – is considered to be incapable of having the necessary mens rea, or guilty intent, to qualify him or her for a criminal custodial sentence.

It means that in many cases, their only punishment comes from their parents.

In July, a group of nine-year-olds deliberately started a forest fire in Beniopa, near Gandia, but were unable to be sentenced due to their age.

Also, in 2005, a 13-year-old found to be behind a one-girl crime-wave in an urbanisation near Valencia was taken into custody when she was caught red-handed burgling a home – but all the police were able to do was call her

parents to pick her up.

Proposals to lower the age of criminality from 14 to 12 came about following the gang-rape of two little girls by youths aged 12 and 13 in Andalucía two months ago.

But minister of justice Francisco Camaño says "a child who commits a crime is still a child";

Camaño says this does not mean an underage criminal will not be punished, but that "not everything can be resolved by withdrawing a person's freedom";

He says that existing laws allow for strict monitoring and re-educating of young offenders rather than placing them in jail.

Hernia op with no anaesthetic leads to 12,000 euros in compensation

A WOMAN who underwent a hernia operation without an anaesthetic has successfully sued the regional health authority.

The patient, then aged 61, was not given enough anaesthetic prior to surgery five-and-a-half years ago.

As a result, she awoke mid-operation in extreme pain, which has led to her suffering disturbing flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia and panic attacks ever since.

In addition to a pathological fear of hospitals, health centres and operations, she now suffers anxiety attacks if she sees bright lights or hears people talking of medical issues.

She did not consider that the letter of apology from the unnamed Valencia hospital was sufficient to compensate for the trauma she underwent during and after surgery, and decided to take legal action against the health authority.

Following last week's court case, she was awarded 12,000 euros in compensation.

Cardiac arrest man diagnosed with panic attack

THE widow and children of a 46-year-old man who died of a heart attack that the hospital failed to diagnose have been awarded 144,000 euros in compensation.

Back in 2003, the deceased went to casualty at a hospital in Valencia — which has not been named — complaining of chest pains.

He was diagnosed as having a panic attack and sent home without treatment.

But the next day he fell out of bed unconscious and was rushed to hospital.

The patient died before reaching the centre.

A post-mortem revealed he had suffered from an ischaemic heart attack as a result of a blood clot, and that he had severe and ongoing arteriosclerosis, which could lead to angina or a cardiac arrest if left untreated.

The widow also claimed negligence on the grounds that her late husband's medical papers — including a copy of the ECG he was given in accident and emergency — had not been retained by the hospital.

As a result, the ministry of health has been found liable and ordered to pay 144,000 euros in compensation.

Fiestas "can cure illnesses"; among the faithful, says research

FIESTA pilgrimages are good for your health, a recent study has revealed.

Doctorate student María Teresa Pinedo has researched five different pageants that take place in Elche every year for her PhD.

Each of these involves a pilgrimage of some description in honour of a saint or other holy figure.

Those who take part are found to be generally healthier, and sick people who do so are more likely to recover.

Pinedo, who is working on her thesis at Alicante university, is looking into the positive health benefits of a person's religious faith.

She has found from her research that "religion has an energetic effect on believers which lends them the strength to fight against their health problem";

The student also says that "religious convictions are used as a tool for emotional unburdening"; and that following an unpleasant diagnosis, a patient who follows a faith "acts by seeking refuge in his or her beliefs, both as a tool for consolation and for hope that gives them the mental energy to find a solution";

The festivals she has studied are those of San Antón, San Crispín, El Rocío, La Venida de la Virgen, and Santa Ana.

Saints in the Catholic religion are considered to be "specialists"; in helping those with certain problems.

For example, San Blas is said to cure coughs, whilst San Antón — whose January festival is best known for its blessing of the animals — is thought to guard against skin problems, and the people of Alicante believe Santa Faz brings much-needed rain in times of drought and poor harvest.