

TRIP REPORT FROM THE SOUTHERN PART OF

FUERTEVENTURA

30/12 1999- 6/1 2000

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Introduction

I decided on short notice to get from the snow and the cold winds, and due to good prices I chose Fuerteventura. I travelled with a friend of mine, who's not really interested in birds, so I had to be some kind of social with a limited time for birding. Before leaving, I got good help from several people after a request for information on the EBN. I also got my hands on a copy of Clarke & Collins's guide to Canary Islands, which was a very helpful to get very good locations for my main target species close to where I stayed. My main target species where the Canary Islands Chat, Plain Swift, and the Houbara Bustard.

Accommodation:

We stayed at a hotel called Sol Jandia Mar, in Morro Jable, which is located on the southernmost part of the island on the peninsula of Jandia. This was a perfect place for me to stay since some of the best locations for my main target species where actually on the peninsula. I think that this also must be a perfect place if you're travelling with you're family and want to spend some time looking for the specialities on the island. I did no hire any car, although this was rather cheap. For the "longer trips" I used the local buses for transport which also where rather cheap, but you must never be in a hurry using them, they are never on time. When you're well on them though, you can expect quite a ride.....

Locations visited at the Island

Sicornia scrub of Morro Jable.

The first two days we spent the time just relaxing, and of course celebrating the new Millennium. On the third day I tried to check out the sicornia scrub right by the lighthouse in Morro Jable. This was indeed a good place to start. In addition to the scrub, there was also running water located here, which I suspect is pure sour from the many hotels on the resort. Birds that where located here was Spectacled warblers, Little Egrets, waders like Common Sandpiper, Dunlin, Wimbrel and wintering passerines like White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail (of nominate race), Redwing and Starling. And of course the bird located on every spot of the island; Berthelot's Pipit, where also represented here along with the koenigi race of the Mediterranean Great Grey Shrike. This was also the place for introduced/escaped species including Sacred and White Ibis and Monk Parakeet.

Punto del Jandia and Barranco de Vinarnar

On the fourth day I got my friend with me on a walk inland from the hotel towards highest top of the island which is "Punto de Jandia". The walk on track to the top gave very little, but as we reached for the last 200 m. climb to the top, I was distracted by a swift which came at a very high

speed and disappeared behind the right hand side of the ridge we were walking. I went after it and there I got excellent overhead view of two Plain Swifts gliding along the side of the ridge. My first target species was secured! Instead of continuing the walk to the top, we decided to go down on left side of the ridge. This was a very good choice! Although it was a rather steep and not too easy terrain to walk in, the scenery that met us as we walked down the hillside was great. I suspect that this must be the greenest part of the island, with several herbs and plants, but also a spectacular cactus species, which grew in large clusters. But above all, this was also a good place for the Canary Islands Chat, which were numerous here. As we walked down to the underlying barranco I had several chats that I could study on short distance, I even got some fairly good pictures of it. Other species that was located here included a lot of Spectacled Warblers. I could hear the rattling sound of them all the time. Common Buzzards of the local race was soaring the hillsides and Barbary Partridges was seen and heard down in the barranco. I also located the first Barbary Ground squirrel here, which is an introduced mammal on the island.

The sandy plains of Costa Calma.

On the fifth day I took a local bus to the resort of Costa Calma. The bus was cheap, 285 pesetas, and the bus trip lasted for about twenty minutes before I got to the destination. As I arrived I walked through the man made forest of Costa Calma, which held lots of Linnets, several Goldfinches and European Robins. It might have been a good idea to spend some more time here, but the sandy plains were waiting..... I walked out on the plain as described in guide, and the first desert species that met me were the numerous Lesser Short-toed Lark. They were extremely common all over the plain, including flocks containing more than fifty individuals in one single flock. I tried to walk in a kind of a U-track to get as much as possible of the plain covered. After about two hours of walking and scanning the plain, I got my reward: Houbara!! Right in front of me, about 50 or 60 m. away the sneaky bird appeared. All I could think of was to get my camera, and get some pictures. I got time to both take pictures of it, and also to study it through the tube before I left it alone. Other species seen on the plain were: Cream-coloured Coursers, Black-bellied Sandgrouses, Stone Curlew and Kentish Plover. I even met two German birders on the plain, along with 3 Dotterels they had seen a possible American Golden Plover, although they were not certain if it really was this species I tried to relocate it with no luck.

Catalina Garcia.

On the seventh day I decided to take the bus a little further to a place called "Catalina Garcia". This spot is located about 3 km south of the village called Tuineje. I took the bus to the village and walked the 3km's back, but as I reached the Catalina Garcia, I was kind of frustrated finding a bus stop exactly at the junction where this bird spot is located, this was perhaps not the biggest disappointment. Reading the guide, I had expected a marshy area, filled with waders and perhaps some waterfowl. I found a 2 m² pool of water with no less than two Lesser Black-backed gulls.... But I got on a better mood as I heard the delightfully off tune calls of Trumpeter Finches. When I sat down, trying to get some descent photos of them I suddenly got distracted by "windy" sound right above my head. Out of the blue came five Swifts, which began foraging over the small pool of water. They looked more "bulky", and had more contrasts than the two Plain's I had seen earlier. These were actually Pallids which had returned from their wintering quarters in Africa. This was also confirmed by photos I took. Somewhat later, I went over to the opposite side of the road to investigate the farmlands and the tamarisk thickets. The tamarisks were really the best biotope I found for Sardinian Warblers. I expected that this species would dominate much more on the island than they did, they were actually rather scarce distributed. As I waited for the bus for my return, (which on the island can take an hour or two), I scanned the sky for raptors and found one of a total of three Egyptian Vultures on the trip.

Full Species List:

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) silkehegre

1/1: 2 ind. Sicornia scrub, stayed during the period, 3 on the 6th.

5/5: 1 flying over the hotel.

6/1: 1 ind. 1 km south of Tarajalejo. (From bus)

[Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) helligibis]

Whole period: up to 13 ind. Of this introduced species feeding in the water, by the sicornia scrub.

[White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) hvit ibis]

6/1: 4 ind. with the Sacred Ibises.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) åtselgribb

30/12: 1 subad. Seen well from the bus.

5/1: 1 2nd cal. Catalina Garcia.

6/1: 1 2nd cal. Seen from the bus.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo insularum*) musvåk

30/12: 1 ind. seen from the bus.

2/1: 3 ind. Jandia/Barranco de Vinarnar

5/1: 1 ind. seen from the bus near La Lajhita.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*) tårnfalk

Whole period: Common, scattered distribution everywhere I went.

Barbary Partridge (*Alectoris barbara koenigi*) berberhøne

2/1: 5 ind. Barranco de Vinarnar.

5/1: 3 ind., farmland of Catalina Garcia.

Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata fuerteventurae*) kragetrappe

3/1: 1 ind., plain of Cosa Calma

Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicephalus insularum*) triel

3/1: 1 ind., plain of Costa Calma.

Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius cursor bannermani*) ørkenløper

3/1: 6 ind., plain of Costa Calma. (4+2)

Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) hvitbrystlo

3/1: 2 ind., Plain of Costa Calma. (m. + 1st w.)

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) vipe

5/1: 1 ind. seen from bus 3 km south of Catalina Garcia.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) myrsnipe

4/1: 1 ind. sicornia scrub still present 6/6.

- Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) strandsnipe
Whole peiod: Up to 5 ind. Sicornia scrub.
- Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) gluttsnipe
1/1: 1 ind. Sicornia scrub. Still present 4/1
- Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) småspove
6/1: 1 ind. Sicornia scrub
- Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) enkeltbekasin
1/1: 1 ind. Sicornia scrub.
- Western Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michaelis atlantis*) gulbeingråmåke
Whole period: Very common. Mostly along the cost, but some inland.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) sildemåke
Whole period: some ind. seen every day.
- Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) splitterne
Whole period: Up to ten ind. patrolling the beaches of Morro Jable.
- Black-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles orientalis*) svartbuksandhøne
3/1: 30+ ind. on the plain of Costa Calma. Hard to estimate any correct number since they flew rather active around. Several flocks seen, largest contained 15 ind. Most found on the east side of the wadi which splits the plain in two.
- Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) klippedue
Whole period: very common, most likely to be feral pigeons.
- Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) tyrkerdue
Whole period: very common in towns and villages.
- Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) turteldue
6/1: 2 ind. Sicornia scrub.
- Pallid Swift (*Apus pallidus brehmorum*) gråseiler
5/1: 5 ind. Catalina Garcia.
- Plain Swift (*Apus unicolor*) kanariseiler
2/1: 2 ind. Ridge by Punto del Jandia.
6/1: 2 ind. Sicornia scrub. And 1 ind. flying parallel, 10 m. from the bus, with the same speed.
- [Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) munkeparakitt]

Whole period: A colony of this introduced species breeds in the palm trees by the Stella Canaris Hotel.

Lesser Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella rufescens polatzeki*) flekkdverglerke

3/1: 150+ on the plains of Costa Calma. (Maybe an underestimation)
Extremely common all over the plain. Largest flock approx. 50 ind.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*) taksvale

1/1: 1 ind. By the lighthouse of Morro Jable. 2 ind. Same place 4/4.

Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*) kanaripiplerke

Whole period: Extremely common, was present on every location I visited.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) linerle

1/1: 3 ind., Sicornia scrub, during the whole period.
3/1: 2 ind. Costa Calma, at a construction place.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) vintererle (Nominate race)

1/1: 2 ind. Both nominate race. Stayed the whole period.

European Robin (*Erithacus rubetra*) rødstrupe

3/1: 2 ind. In the "Forrest" of Costa Calma.

Canary Islands Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*) kanariskvett

2/1: 15-20 ind. In the Barranco de Vinarnar. Hard to estimate any exact count. Birds of different sex and age classes were seen.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) rødvingetrost

1/1: 7 ind. Seen at the Sicornia scrub, stayed during the whole period.

Sardinian Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*) svarthodesanger

1/1: 1 ind. Sicornia scrub
2/1: 1 ind. On the back side of Stella Canaris.
3/1: 1 ind. Forrest of Costa Calma.
5/1: 5 ind. Tamarisk thicket, Catalina Garcia.

Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*) maskesanger

Whole period: The most common warbler on the island. Seen in good numbers at every location I visited. Best day count: 30+ ind. at Barranco de Vinarnar 2/1.

Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*) gransanger

3/1: 1 ind. Costa Calma.
5/1: 2 ind. Most probably of collybita race, due to plumage and sound.

Iberian Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus (c.) ibericus*) iberiagransanger

31/12: 1 ind. probably of this race, both due to plumage difference from collybita, but first of all, the soft down going contact call. Stayed in the hedge in front of our balcony at the hotel at least to 5/5.

Canarian Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis koenigi*) kanarikrattvarsler

Whole period: rather common and evenly distributed at all the places I visited.

Raven (*Corvus corax tingitanus*) ravn

Whole period: 2-4 seen every day. Probably nests in an extremely high palm tree at Catalina Garcia.

Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) stær

1/1: 12 ind. Sicornia scrub. Seen during the whole period)

Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolus*) middelhavsspurv

Whole period: Extremely common. Same role as House Sparrow has on the continent.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina harterti*) tornirisk

1/1: 2 ind in the Sicornia scrub.
2/1: 1 ind. in the Barranco de Vinarnar.
3/1: Aprox. 30+ in the forest of Costa Calma.
4/1: 1 m. Sicornia scrub
5/1: 5 ind. Catalina Garcia.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) stilits

3/1: 15-20 ind. in the forest of Costa Calma.

Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githageneus amantum*) trumpeterfink

5/1: 17 ind. Catalina Garcia.

Mammals:

Rabbit was seen in singles almost at every location.

Barbary Ground Squirrel was seen in the Barranco, the plain of Costa Calma (a large colony in the wadi) and at Catalina Garcia.