

A Trip to Tenerife, Canary Islands 23-30 December 2001

- some bird observations by Ulf Lindell (u.lindell@telia.com)

We took an unspecified low price trip to Tenerife – this year to avoid the the cold winter in Sweden and to stay away from the Christmas stress. It was a family trip – my wife Bodil, our son Kristian and myself - and our aim wasn't just birdwatching – but when one get the chance to see something new...

Our travel agent was Apollo and our destination turned out to be Puerto del la Cruz (Puerto Cruz) on the north coast of Tenerife. We flew from Landvetter, Sweden.

Puerto Cruz is the old holiday destination on the island and it seems to be a rather pleasant and laidback holiday resort. We stayed at the small and simple Hotel Chinyero close to a ravine (Barranco Martianez) but a bit away from the sea. The ravine though was quite productive in terms of birdlife.

Rent a car

Tenerife is a rather small island and in a day you will be able to reach each corner and turn back to the hotel. The topografical circumstances though will make some journeys rather time consuming. The motorway however is convenient, stretching from Los Christianos/the Airport in the south passing the East coast over Santa Cruz, and onwards along the North coast to Puerto Cruz.

We rented a Hyundai - the smallest car available. For 6 days we payed 18000 pts (approx 95 euro) free mileage and insurance included. The price for the fuel was around 95 pts a litre – around 0.5 euro. It's a bargain to travel around in Tenerife.

Weather

During our visit we had one rainy day, and most partly cloudy weather. No strong winds and a day temperature around 22-25 C at sea level.

Birds in the winter

Most of the specialities of the Canary Island can be seen during the winter months. The two Laurel-Pigeons, the Berthelot's Pipit, the Atlantic Canary, the Blue Chaffinch and the partly migratory Plain Swift can all be spotted. Most of them can be wiewed with great ease – the two Pigeons is a challenge though.

Winter is not the best time for watching seabirds at Tenerife. Perhaps will strong winds produce some good birds as Little and Cory's Shearwater.

Some Bird Areas

Shortage of fresh water on Tenerife make every pond or dam interesting for waterfowl and birdwatchers. We visited just one reservoir (embalse) close to Puerto Cruz – Embalse de Cruz Santa. Near La Laguna in the North-east there is said to be another reservoir good for North American waterfowl and shorebirds – Embalse de Valle Molina. In the dry south of Tenerife the Roquito de Fraile – close to Faro de Rasca (lighthouse) – is said to be the best for North American specialities. Try to walk to the reservoir from midway between the road from Las Galletas to Guaza.

The road in the North-west to Punta de Teno is spectacular and will produce birds like Barbary Falcon, Barbary Partridge and Spectacled Warbler. The Teno Mountains is said to hold Rock Sparrows (in the village Tena Alto), and the Masca Valley is recommended for scenic views and birds as the Canary subspecies of Chaffinch, Blue Tit and Robin. Not far from here is Erjos from where a dirt road take you to Montaña del Agua – a Natural Reserve to protect the laurel forest and it´s inhabitants – mainly the Dark-tailed and White-tailed Laurel-pigeons. These species could probably also be seen in the Laurel forests close to Los Realejos (Barranco de Ruiz and Ladera de Tigaiga).

The Canary Pine forest on the way up to Teide hold Blue Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Canarian Goldcrest. Montaña Roja in the North was good and Las Lajas South of the mountain is said to be good for the birds.

Remember to check out the volcanic and barren coastline for shorebirds. At first it seems to be without life, but surely with some patience some shorebirds will turn up.

Bird Observations

Grey Heron *Ardea c. cinerea* 1 Amarilla Golf Course (the pond) 25.12 and 26.12 and 13 at Embalse de Cruz Santa (near Puerto Cruz).

Little Egret *Egretta g. garzetta* 1 Puerto Cruz 23.12, 2 near Garachico 24.12, 1 El Medano 25.12, 3 Amarilla Golf Course (the pond) 25.12, 1 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12 and 2 Embalse de Cruz Santa 28.12.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* 1 near Abades (Autopista del Sur) 23.12 and 8 at Amarilla Golf course 25-26.12.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus granti* 1 Los Pinos Altos and 1 Puerto Cruz 30.12.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus canariensis* Common and widespread.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* 1 5 km N Puerto Cruz 29.12 and 1 Puerto Cruz 30.12.

Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides* 1 about 10 km N of El Medano 23.12 and 29.12 and 1 on the cliffs of the road leading to Punta de Teno (just after the second tunnel).

Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara koenigi* 1 along the road to Punta de Teno 24.12 and 2 heard in the Masca Valley 26.12.

Coot *Fulica atra* 2 Embalse de Cruz Santa 28.12.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius curonicus* 1 near El Medano 29.12.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* 8 El Medano 25.12, 2 Amarilla Golf Course (the pond), 6 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12, 2 near El Medano 29.12 and 1 Las Galletas 29.12.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* 1 near El Medano 29.12.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* 2 El Medano 25.12 and 2 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* 14 at El Medano 25.12.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* 1 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* 1 near Garachico 24.12, 2 El Medano 25.12, 2 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12 and 1 Las Galletas 29.12.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* 1 Amarilla Golf Course (the pond) 25-26.12.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 2 Amarilla Golf Course (the pond) 25-26.12 and 2 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* 8 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12 and 5 Las Galletas 29.12.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* 1 juv El Medano 29.12.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans atlantis* Common and widespread along the coast.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus graellsii* 2 ad Punta del Hidalgo 28.12 and 5 (2 ad) Las Galletas 29.12.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus s. sandvicensis* 2 El Medano 25.12 and 1 El Medano 26.12 and 29.12.

Rock Dove / Feral Dove *Columba livia canariensis / domesticus* Seen almost everywhere. Some were apparently feral ones, but most looked like true Rock Doves.

Dark-tailed Laurel-pigeon *Columba bollii* 2 seen and 5-6 heard Montaña del Agua 26.12. 3 unidentified *C. bollii/junoniae*. (10.00-12.00 p.m.).

White-tailed Laurel-pigeon *Columba junoniae* 1 Montaña del Agua 26.12.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia t. turtur* 1 Puerto Cruz 27.12.

Eurasian Collared-dove *Streptopelia d. decaocto* Common and widespread, especially in town and villages.

Barbary Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea risoria* (feral) 1 uncertain identification - a pale individual near Bajamar/Punta del Hidalgo.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (feral) 1 25.12 and 2 27.12 at Puerto Cruz, 2 near Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Yellow-headed Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala* (feral) 6 at Puerto Cruz 27.12.

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* 17 23.12, 7 27.12 and 1 30.12 at Puerto Cruz, 6 Autopista del Sur, 31 in the Masca Valley 26.12.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa e. epops* 1 at Amarillo Golf Course 25.12. The subspecies is uncertain, the bird seemed to be rather small and pale.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major canariensis* 2 males at Boca de Tauce, S from Teide.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* 1 at Amarillo Golf Course 26.12.

Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii* Common and widespread – especially along the coast. Sightings even at 2.000m altitude.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea canariensis* 2 El Medano 25.12, 2 Amarilla Golf Course 25.12, 1 Puerto Cruz 27.12, 1 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12 and 1 Embalse de Cruz Santa 28.12

European Robin *Erthacus rubecula superbus* 10 Masca Valley 26.12 and 6 Montaña del Agua 26.12.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula cabreræ* Common and widespread in bushy areas/woodland at lower altitude.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis* 1 near Punta de Teno 24.12, 1 near Garachico 24.12, 1 Amarilla Golf Course 26.12 and 1 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra* 4 Icod de los Viños 24.12, 2 Masca Valley 26.12, 1 Montaña del Agua 26.12, 2 Puerto Cruz 27.12 and 1 Punta del Hidalgo 28.12.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla heineken* 1 Puerto Cruz 23.12, 27.12 and 29.12 (different individuals).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita canariensis* Very common and widespread in bushy areas/woodland all over the island. Did hear both the more explosive Cetti's Warbler-like song as the more familiar chiff-chaff sound. Moreover, some birds show a big repertoire of calls and song variations.

Canary Islands Goldcrest *Regulus (regulus) teneriffæ* 4 heard Montaña del Agua 26.12 and 3 Montaña Roja NE of Teide.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus teneriffæ* 2 near Punta de Teno 24.12, 15 Masca Valley 26.12, 8 Montaña del Agua 26.12, 20 in the pine forest around Teide 27.12, 4-10 Puerto Cruz 27-30.12.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor koenigi* 1 near El Medano 25.12 and 1 Teide (at 2.000 m) 26.12.

Common Raven *Corvus corax canariensis* 1 near El Medano 23.12 and 2 along the road leading to Punta de Teno 24.12.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer h. hispaniolensis* Seen and heard in Puerto Cruz and in many villages around the island.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs canariensis* 3 Masca Valley 26.12 and 2 Montaña del Agua 26.12.

Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla t. teydea* 5 males 1 female seen at a picnic spot near Montaña Roja 27.12. Several others heard in the pine forest zone around Teide.

Atlantic Canary *Serinus canaria* Very common and widespread in bushy areas/woodland especially in the North.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis c. parva* 2 Masca Valley 26.12 and 2 Puerto Cruz 27.12.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina meadewaldoi* 2 Masca Valley 26.12.