



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Canary Islands Trip Report Macaronesian Endemics

16th to 22nd April 2016



Houbara Bustard by David Hoddinott

Trip Report Compiled by Tour Leader David Hoddinott

Trip Summary

We started our trip in Madrid where we arrived in the late afternoon, settled into a comfortable hotel and then, over a delicious dinner, chatted about the adventures to come on the Canary Islands.

The following morning we took a flight to the arid island of Fuerteventura, situated in the eastern Canary Islands group in the Atlantic Ocean, just off Morocco. On arrival, we checked in at our comfortable hotel and then set about enjoying some birding around the nearby Los Molinos Reservoir. Here we notched up a good selection of species including some key targets. Notable sightings included good numbers of Ruddy Shelduck, Common Buzzard, Egyptian Vulture, Little Ringed Plover, Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Kestrel, Northern Raven, Lesser Short-toed Lark, Spectacled Warbler and Trumpeter Finch. Both Canary Islands Stonechat, which is endemic to Fuerteventura, and Berthelot's Pipit, a Macaronesian endemic, gave splendid views and so we returned to the hotel chuffed with our afternoon's birding and excited in anticipation of the birding the following day.



Trumpeter Finch by David Hoddinott

The following morning we departed early for the drive to the area around La Oliva in search of the most sought after bird of the trip. What else but the great Houbara Bustard! It's not endemic to the islands, however the Canary Islands are certainly the best place in the world to see this impressive bird. Sadly its numbers in North Africa have declined dramatically over the last 5 years due mainly to hunting pressure. It is now very rare over much of its range on the African continent. After about an hour's scanning over suitable habitat we first found a splendid pair of Cream-coloured Coursers and then finally managed to find a distant bustard which gave fairly good scope views. Happy with having seen it but preferring to get better views we continued our search. Rounding a corner we came across a pair of Barbary Partridge with chicks, a great sighting! A little further on in a rocky gully we found another Houbara Bustard and this was



Cream-coloured Courser by David

much closer and gave superb views. A further visit to Los Molinos Reservoir saw us picking up a roosting Eurasian Stone-curlew and several Black-bellied Sandgrouse. It was then time for lunch and we found a great little restaurant near the beach. There was some other birding along the beachfront which had some of us a little distracted. In the afternoon we visited the Salinas where, whilst doing some sea watching, we observed several rafts of Cory's Shearwaters sitting on the sea and a few Northern Gannets. Pleased with our day's birding we headed back to the hotel where we freshened up before a nice dinner and good night's rest.

Having now seen the key targets on the island we had time for some exploration. Our first stop at a Tamarisk wadi yielded Eurasian Collared Dove, Laughing Dove, Pallid Swift, Southern Grey Shrike, African Blue Tit, Willow Warbler, a nice surprise in the form of a confiding Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and Spanish Sparrow. We then opted to travel to Costa Calma where I'd noted



several vagrants in the past. This proved to be rewarding with a nice scenic drive and good views of Yellow-browed Warbler, a rare vagrant, a fleeting Redwing plus European Robin, Common Linnet and European Goldfinch.

The following day we flew to Tenerife and after arrival visited an area of laurel forest where I'd had success in the past of seeing the tricky Laurel Pigeon. No sooner than we had climbed out of the vehicle, one was seen flying above us. It took some time but with patience, we managed to all enjoy good scope views of this elusive species. We then headed off to Aguamansa on the edge of the El Teide National Park and here, we scored with some wonderful sightings in just a few minutes. First the Goldcrest appeared, sometimes considered a distinct species (Canary Islands Kinglet) and then several Canary Islands Chiffchaff showed well, shortly followed by a splendid male Blue Chaffinch, a key species for the island and the resident distinct race of Common Chaffinch. After lunch we visited Erjos Ponds where unfortunately the weather was cold and windy and so we returned to base well chuffed with yet another set of endemics under the belt.



Blue Chaffinch by David Hoddinott

The next day we went in search of Bolle's Pigeon, the other endemic columbid on the island which is usually easier to find. Our first stop at Aguamansa saw us leaving shortly thereafter due to inclement weather. We then continued on a most beautiful drive through El Teide National Park where we enjoyed good views of the mountain and surrounding forest and scrub habitat. After lunch we found some great laurel forested gullies and soon we were watching several more Laurel Pigeons and then suddenly the shout of Bolle's Pigeon went up and we had good views of at least three birds in flight. We also noted good numbers of Plain Swift, Atlantic Canary and a superb Eurasian Sparrowhawk flying nearby at eye-level, rounding off a splendid morning. With



Barbary Partridge by David Hoddinott

time to spare we visited Chamajiga and here were very fortunate to stumble upon a Bolle's Pigeon on a nest, which gave great views for all.

The following day we took the ferry crossing to Gomera Island and noted huge numbers of Cory's Shearwaters which was very impressive to see and a brief Barolo Shearwater. We also noted good numbers of Long-finned Pilot Whales and Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins.

And so ended a fabulous adventure where we enjoyed good accommodation, a wonderful selection of meals, great birding finding all the endemics, near-endemics, the fabulous Houbara Bustard and some rare vagrants and magnificent scenery. We then headed to the airport to catch our return flights home. Thanks to everyone for making this a most fun and enjoyable trip!



Annotated List of Birds Recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 6.2 List of Please cite: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2016. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Large numbers were recorded near the Los Molinos Reservoir on Fuerteventura.

Pheasants & allies Phasianidae

Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara*

We enjoyed a fabulous sighting of a pair with chicks on Fuerteventura near the Los Molinos Reservoir.

Petrels, Shearwaters Procellariidae

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

We enjoyed good views of ten off the Salinas near Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura. Later during the ferry crossing from Tenerife to Gomera we observed huge numbers of over 1000. An impressive sighting indeed!

Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*

One was seen briefly during the ferry crossing from Tenerife to Gomera, a leader only sighting.

Hérons, Bitterns Ardeidae

Grey Heron *Ardeacinerea*

We had good views of one at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura and a further two at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Several were seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura and another at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife.

Gannets Sulidae

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

We enjoyed good views of ten off the Salinas near Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Our first sighting was of two adults flying near the Los Molinos Reservoir and several more were seen en route from Costa Calma to Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

We had good views of one near Aguamansa and another near Las Lagas, Tenerife.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

We enjoyed several sightings daily on both Fuerteventura and Tenerife Islands.

Bustards Otidae

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulate*

We had good scope views of one near La Oliva and better closer views of another near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura. What a splendid bird and certainly one of the highlights of the trip!

Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

We had good views of one at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

A flock of thirty was seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura and a further eight at Erjos



Ponds, Tenerife.

Stone-curlews, Thick-knees Burhinidae

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedichnemus*

We had superb views of one near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Stilts, Avocets Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

A flock of nine was seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Plovers Charadriidae

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Several were seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

We had good views of one at Salinas, Fuerteventura.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Three were seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

One was seen at Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Couriers, Pratincoles Glareolidae

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

We had good views of two near La Oliva, Fuerteventura

Gulls, Terns and Skimmers Laridae

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Large numbers were seen on the coast on Fuerteventura and many more on Tenerife. At Los Cristianos we noted a large breeding colony whilst doing the ferry crossing to Gomera

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

At least a dozen were seen around the Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Pigeons, Doves Columbidae

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Seen on both Fuerteventura and Tenerife

Bolle's Pigeon (CIE) *Columba bollii*

We had good flight views of several near Icod de Alto, Tenerife.

Laurel Pigeon (CIE) *Columba junoniae*

We had good scope views of several on Tenerife. A real highlight as this species is often rather difficult to find

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Up to ten were seen daily on Fuerteventura and Tenerife.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*

Three were seen in a small Baranco on Fuerteventura.

Swifts Apodidae



Plain Swift (ME)*Apus unicolor*

Good numbers were seen in several flocks on Tenerife. Up to 100 on one day

Pallid Swift*Apus pallidus*

Small numbers were seen daily on Fuerteventura.

Hoopoes Upupidae**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

We had great views of one at Los Molinos Reservoir and scattered sightings elsewhere on Fuerteventura.

Clements only recognizes two species of Hoopoe; Eurasian U. epops and Madagascar U. marginata. One further species, is widely recognized namely African U. africana and a 4th is sometime recognized, West/Central African U. senegalensis. We only recorded the nominate Palaearctic form U. e. epops.

Woodpeckers Picidae**Great Spotted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos major*

A pair of obliging individuals flew in and perched nearby giving us outstanding views in El Teide National Park.

Caracaras, Falcons Falconidae Common (Eurasian) Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus canariensis*

We enjoyed a number of sightings daily on Tenerife.

Common (Eurasian) Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*

Small numbers were seen daily on Fuerteventura.

NOTE: Some authorities split this species into Common Kestrel, F. tinnunculus which we observed (occurring in East Africa and the Palaearctic region) and Rock Kestrel, F. rupicolus that occurs in Southern Africa. Clements does not as yet recognize these splits.

Peregrine Falcon*Falco peregrinus*

We had good views of a pair on Fuerteventura and another on Tenerife

Shrikes Laniidae**Southern Grey Shrike***Lanius meridionalis*

We had good views of several on the drive to Costa Calma, Fuerteventura. Only one bird was seen on Tenerife.

NOTE: Southern Grey Shrike, L. meridionalis of Europe and N.Africa has been split further into Steppe Grey Shrike, L. pallidirostris of Asia and migrant to East Africa. Clements recognizes the split from Northern Shrike but not the further splits of the Southern Grey Shrike group.

Crows, Jays Corvidae**Northern (Common) Raven***Corvus corax*

Up to ten were seen daily on Fuerteventura with good sightings at Los Molinos Reservoir

Tits Paridae**African Blue Tit***Cyanistes teneriffae*

One was seen at a small Baranco on Fuerteventura and small numbers daily in El Teide National Park on Tenerife.

NOTE: The sub-species of African Blue Tit we observed on Tenerife is C.t. teneriffae and the sub-species we observed on Fuerteventura is C.t. degener.

Larks Alaudidae**Lesser Short-toed Lark***Calandrella rufescens*

We observed two near the Los Molinos area, Fuerteventura.



Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

We observed one at the Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Leaf Warblers and allies Phylloscopidae**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

We found one in a Tamarisk wadi on Fuerteventura.

*NOTE: Most authorities, including Clements have split the Chiffchaff complex into 4 full species. The nominate form which we recorded is known as Common Chiffchaff P. collybita.***Canary Islands Chiffchaff (CIE)** *Phylloscopus canariensis*

We enjoyed superb views of up to ten daily in El Teide NP, Tenerife.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

We had great views of one of these rare vagrants at Costa Calma, Fuerteventura. Yet another unexpected highlight of the trip!

Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae**Eurasian Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Although rather secretive we managed good views of a male on Gomera.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

Several were seen near the Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

We enjoyed good views of a male on Tenerife.

Goldcrests, Kinglets Regulidae**Goldcrest [Canary Islands Kinglet] (CIE)** *Regulus regulus teneriffae*

We had superb views of one at Aguamansa, Tenerife.

Thrushes Turdidae**Common (Eurasian) Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

We had good views of up to thirty daily on Tenerife.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

One was seen at Costa Calma, Fuerteventura.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes*

We had great views of one in a Tamarisk wadi, Fuerteventura

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

One was seen at Costa Calma, Fuerteventura and several more on Tenerife.

Canary Islands Stonechat (E) *Saxicola dacotiae*

We enjoyed great sightings of up to four daily on Fuerteventura with superb views at Los Molinos Reservoir.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*

A flock of twenty was seen near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Wagtails, Pipits Motacillidae**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

We enjoyed good views of a couple at Aguamansa, Tenerife.

Berthelot's Pipit (ME) *Anthus berthelotii*

We had superb views of up to six daily on Fuerteventura with great views near Los Molinos Reservoir

Finches Fringillidae

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

We had good views of a couple at Aguamansa, Tenerife

Blue Chaffinch (CIE) *Fringilla teydea*

We enjoyed outstanding views of several in Teide NP, Tenerife. A stunning bird and certainly one of the trip highlights!

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

A superb six birds were seen near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

Common (Eurasian) Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

We enjoyed great views of up to ten daily with good sightings at Costa Calma of sub-species *harterti*, Fuerteventura.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

A total of twenty were seen at Costa Calma, Fuerteventura.

Atlantic Canary (ME) *Serinus canaria*

Up to ten were seen daily on Tenerife with fabulous views. A beautiful songster!

Annotated List of Mammals Recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows J. Kingdon *The Kingdon Field guide to African Mammals* (1997) Academic Press.

Total: 4 species

Ground Squirrels Rodentia

Barbary Ground-Squirrel *Alantocerus getulus*

This endearing rodent was recorded on several occasions near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura.

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

We had good views of two near Los Molinos Reservoir, Fuerteventura

Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

We enjoyed fabulous views of six during the ferry trip to Gomera.

Long-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala melas*

We had great views of ten during the ferry trip to Gomera.

Rockjumper Birding Tours Worldwide Birding Adventures

PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa

Registration number 2001/059480/23

Tel: +27 33 394 0225

Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225

Tel (USA & Canada) toll free: 1-888-990-5552 Email:

info@rockjumperbirding.com

Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com Website:

www.rockjumperbirding.com

