

Madeira

7th-14th August 2000

Participants: – Ian Fisher & Alan Johnston

Flight & accommodation: - A one-week package holiday booked at Callers Pegasus, Newcastle Airport. Flight by Air Azores to Santa Catarina Airport with half-board hotel accommodation at the Dom Pedro Baia in Machico. £473 each.

Car hire: - Pre booked at Callers Pegasus, we hired a Nissan Micra (but got upgraded to a Renault Clio on arrival) with Bravacar (owned by holiday autos). £189 for the week. Petrol is roughly the same as in the UK and we used about one and a half tankfulls during the week. Air conditioning would have been useful.

Driving: - Madeirans drive on the right. With so many of the roads being narrow and winding (with a lot of hairpin bends) Madeirans tend to overtake at every opportunity. Usually this is no problem to the visiting driver, if you see somebody overtaking heading towards you, make it as easy for them to complete the manoeuvre. Occasionally the overtaking can at best be described as reckless! Madeirans can also stop in the middle of the road at any time to talk to somebody they know and seem to park anywhere, just pulling off at the side of the road, so it always pays for the driver to concentrate on the road ahead and not on the birds or the scenery. Parking in Funchal can be a bit of a problem. There are two free car parks at the western end of the harbour, but these fill up very quickly. All day parking was found at the east end of the harbour, by the market - cost 420 escudos.

Weather: - During our week on the Island the temperature was about 75* F most days. There could be some cloud in the afternoons on the tops of the mountains. Winds were usually light.

Boat trips: - On the 10th we took a trip to the Ilhas Deserta Grande on the Gaviao (the only boat doing trips this year), booked through one of the booths at Funchal harbour. Cost 15000 escudos each (about £50). Good close views of Cory's Shearwater and Bulwer's Petrel were obtained but the hoped for Fea's Petrels never materialised. Previous trips have had good success in seeing Fea's (and we saw them from shore two days later) so I guess we were just unlucky. The Desertas were impressive, and, after a cooked lunch (all part of the trip) we landed on Ilhas Deserta Grande for about 1 hour.

Daylight: - During the week we were on the island sunrise was at 0730 and it was dark by 2130.

Itinerary

7th August – Left Newcastle on flight S49401 at 1400 and arrived in Santa Catarina Airport at 1830. There is no time difference at this time of year. Picked up hire car and drove to Machico where we booked into the hotel. Had a walk around Machico in the evening.

8th August – Drove to Funchal harbour and booked the Desertas trip. Had a look around the harbour. Then went to Ponta da Cruz and had a quick look at the sea, before heading off to look for Long-toed Pigeon at Chao das Faias. Ended the day at Ponta de Sao Lourenco.

9th August – Drove to Porto Moniz via Serra de Agua and across the Paul da Serra. Had a brief seawatch from Porto Moniz, then drove to Ponto do Pargo for a couple of hours before heading back to Porto Moniz for another seawatch. Drove back to Machico via the entertaining (!) North road via Seixal to Sao Vicente then back to Funchal across the Island and back along the dual carriageway.

10th August – Had a quick look around Funchal harbour then on to the Desertas. Spent an hour on Ilhas Desertas Grande before returning to Funchal.

11th August – Left Machico and tried to find the road that goes to the Curral das Freiras. Couldn't find it so went to Ribeiro Frio and walked the levada to the Balcoes viewpoint. Saw three Long-toed Pigeons. Then went to Achada do Teixeira and then down to have a look briefly at Pico das Pedras picnic site. Crawling with people so had a quick look in the three cages of 'native' birds and left. Then had a brief seawatch from Porto da Cruz before heading back to Machico to see the holiday rep in the hotel. Finished the day at Ponta de Sao Lourenco.

12th August – Started the day with an hour's seawatch at Ponta das Gaivotas (on the Ponta de Sao Lourenco). Then went to the Curral das Freiras via a different route from yesterday. Not many birds but well worth it for the scenery. Back to Ponta das Gaivotas for another seawatch to end the day.

13th August – Again started the day with an hour's seawatch from Ponta das Gaivotas, before heading for Rabacal and the Paul de Serra. Then headed onto Ponta do Pargo for a couple of hour's then ending the day with a last seawatch from Porto Moniz. Headed home via the north road, then down to Funchal and along the dual carriageway.

14th August – Two Cory's Shearwaters seen heading back out to sea in the streetlights of Santa Catarina Airport ended the trip. Flew out of Madeira at c0830 then back to Newcastle via Glasgow. Landed at Newcastle at 1330.

Systematic list

Fea's/Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma feae/madeira*

A total of 11 sightings. I'm assuming that the majority, if not all birds we saw were Fea's Petrels. The first was of a single bird flying W past Porto Moniz (fairly close inshore giving excellent views) at 1625 on 9th. Seawatching from Ponta das Gaivotas on 12th produced four from 0900-1000 and six from 1600-1830. All of the latter birds were fairly distant.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

Seawatching totals were as follows: -

At Porto Moniz, our first watch on 9th produced 26 from 1100-1130 and 40 from 1510-1730. Only four were seen on our second visit from 1530-1740 on 13th. At Ponta das Gaivotas ten were seen from 0900-1000 and 48 from 1600-1830 on 12th and 67 from 0830-0930 the next morning.

On the trip to the Desertas on 10th, 36 were seen on the outward trip and 30 on the return journey, with several breeding burrows being noted on the island. Good views were had from the boat.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Seen from just about any headland. Hundreds were seen off Porto Moniz on 9th, Ponta de Sao Lourenco on 11th and Ponta das Gaivotas on 12th. Smaller numbers were seen at the above locations on 8th and 13th and also off Machico on 7th, the Carlton Palms Hotel on 8th, Porto da Cruz on 11th

with two being seen from the airport (in the streetlights) on 14th. 22 were seen from the boat on the outward journey to the Desertas and 50 on the return trip back to Funchal on 10th. Excellent close views were had from most of the locations.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

A shearwater, thought to be this species was seen flying W from Porto Moniz on 13th.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*

Only seen from Porto Moniz. On 9th, singles flew W between 1100-1130 & 1510-1730. Ten flew W from 1530-1740 on 13th.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Singles were seen at Funchal harbour on 8th & 10th, at Machico on 11th and flying towards Canical from Ponta das Gaivotas on 13th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

One was with the Little Egret on the stream running through Machico on 11th.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

25 were seen, at several localities around the island. Six were at Ponta do Pargo on 9th & 13th.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Like the above species, Kestrels were seen in small numbers around the island. 23 were seen in total, with no more than three at any one locality.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Only seen at Ponta do Pargo. Eight were flushed from rough grassland (!) behind the lighthouse on 9th with seven flushed from the same area on 13th.

Coot *Fulica atra*

One was in the stream by the beach outlet at Machico on 7th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

An adult was on the beach at Funchal on 10th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Singles were at Machico on 7th, Ponta da Cruz on 11th and Ponta das Gaivotas the next day.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Three were in Funchal harbour on 10th with another four at the stream outlet on the beach at Machico the next day.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*

Seen in most of the coastal areas visited. 46 off the Carlton Palms Hotel on 8th was the largest gathering noted. 30 were at Machico on 7th & 11th with 20 in Funchal harbour on 10th. This species was not always counted.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Two adults were in Funchal harbour on 8th & 10th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Noted in small numbers at Machico, on the trip to the Desertas, Porto da Cruz Ponta das Gaivotas & Porto Moniz. The largest numbers were at Funchal harbour with 20 on 8th and 10 on 10th. 85 'Commic' Terns flew W at Porto Moniz from 1510-1730 on 9th.

Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Feral Pigeons were not generally looked at. Pure Rock Dove looking birds were noted along the N road from Porto Moniz to Seixal.

Long-toed Pigeon *Columba trocaz*

Three were seen along the dusty road (just before the sharp bend) at Chao das Faias on 8th. Three were also seen from the viewpoint at Balcoes (Ribeiro Frio) on 11th and a single was seen from Achada do Teixeira also on 11th.

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor*

Common. Seen whilst driving just about everywhere! Could be a potential hazard whilst driving along the narrow mountain roads, as they come hurtling at the windscreen only to veer off at the last minute! 30 at Pico Arieiro on 8th was the largest gathering.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Two were at the headland at Ponta do Pargo on 9th & 13th.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Three were at Ponta do Pargo on 9th with a single there on 13th.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Two (possibly breeding?) were by the warden's hut on Ilhas Deserta Grande on 10th.

Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis*

Seen only at Ponta da Sao Lourenco (where 20+ on 11th was the largest total), four were at Ponta do Rosto on 8th, Ponta do Pargo (ten on 13th being the max count), Ponta das Gaivotas on 13th and on Ilhas Deserta Grande (four on 10th).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi*

Regularly seen around harbours and along streams. Nine in Machico on 7th was the highest count. Five were noted between Machico and Porto Moniz on 9th and three at Pico do Furaio on 12th, otherwise only 1 – 2 were noted.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Three were along the track at Chao das Faias on 8th with a single along the track at Ribeiro Frio (to the Balcoes viewpoint) on 11th.

Blackbird *Turdus merula cabreræ*

Heard singing more than seen. On 8th singles were at Funchal and Machico with five at Faja do cedro Gordo and six at Chao das Faias. Four were at Balcoes (Ribeiro Frio) on 11th

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata bella*

A juvenile was in the lighthouse garden at Ponta do Pargo on 9th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla (heineken)*

Two were at Chao das Faias on 8th. On 9th six+ were at Fonte da Pedra and three at Porto Moniz. Six were at Machico on 11th with five at Pico do Furo and along the road to Curral das Freiras on 12th. Birds were also heard singing at several sites.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis*

Heard at several sites before we actually saw one. 20+ were along the track to the Balcoes viewpoint on 11th with another five at Pico das Pedras the same day. 10+ were near Rabacal on 13th.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

A female in Machico on 7th was the only one seen.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia Petronia madeirensis*

25 were at Ponta de Sao Lourenco on the evening of 11th and 14+ were at Ponta do Pargo on 13th. At the latter site a bird was watched carrying food to a presumed nest in the lighthouse garden.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*

Common. 20 were along the track to the Balcoes viewpoint on 11th and ten were at Chao das Faias on 8th. Otherwise seen and heard in small numbers at most wooded localities.

Canary *Serinus canaria*

Seen in small numbers at Machico, Carlton Palms Hotel, Ponta de Sao Lourenco and Pico do Furo. 40 were on Ilhas Deserta Grande on 10th while at Ponta do Pargo, 40+ were present on 9th with 50+ there on 13th.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis parva*

15 were at Machico on 7th with five at Pico Arieiro on 8th with ten on Ponta de Sao Lourenco the same day.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina guentheri*

Six were near Fonte da Pedra on 9th.

Butterflies

The following butterflies were identified on returning home from Madeira. Unfortunately I didn't record places or date, as at the time I didn't know what I was looking at!

1. Large White *Pieris brassicae wollastoni*
2. Small White *Artogeia rapae*
3. Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*
4. Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides*
5. Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
6. Southern Grayling *Hipparchia aristaeus*
7. Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria aegeria*
8. Madeiran Speckled Wood *Pararge xiphia*
9. Monarch *Danaus plexippus*