

Madeira

25th May – 1st June 2015 – Chris Barlow



A family holiday to Madeira, the first three afternoons spent on the Zino's Petrel Pelagic expertly run by Madeira Wind Birds out of Machico, the rest exploring the island looking for the endemics and island subspecies.

25th May

A late afternoon arrival with Canary at the airport and Plain Swift, Common Tern and Yellow-legged Gull from the hotel that overlooked the main harbour of Funchal.

26th May

A quiet morning before the 8 hour afternoon pelagic. With an hour to fill in Machico before the boat sailed, the river mouth held Goldfinch, Canary, Moorhen, Common Waxbill and a single Turnstone as well as Clouded Yellow and Monarch butterflies. Buzzard and Kestrel were both seen on the drive between Funchal and Machico.



The pelagic headed north east of the main island towards Porto Santo, as soon as the rougher seas were reached Cory's Shearwater and Bulwer's Petrel's started showing in good numbers. On reaching the chumming position the engines were barely off and the bait over the side before a close fly by of a Fea's Petrel, close enough for positive identification. Another pterodroma was too distant to identify and Yellow-legged Gull quickly found the chum line along with 2 European Storm Petrels. During the 4 hours in position 3 Zino's Petrel also passed close to the boat and a Manx Shearwater was also seen along with a pod of Atlantic Spotted Dolphin.

Zino's Petrel at sea

27th May

The Plain Swift's morning hunt over the hotel was joined by 3 Pallid Swift and several House Martin while this time further up river at Machico we found the long staying Ruddy Shelduck and several pairs of Grey Wagtail. The second boat trip headed due east out under Porto Santo the sea was calmer; not ideal conditions for seabirds but the chum line still picked up two new species for the trip with a lingering Wilson's Storm Petrel while a single Madeiran Storm Petrel passed over twice along with at one point 5 European Storm Petrel all on the chum together. The chum also drew in a Blue Shark just before dusk.



(left) *Wilson's Storm Petrel at sea*

28th May

With 'sea legs' now developed a morning venture to the freshwater at Lugar de Baxio was rewarded by two Spoonbills and a fly-over adult Night Heron as well as two Grey Herons. Flat calm and sunny conditions were not ideal for the final pelagic which headed south out between Madeira and the Desertas Islands and early on a Loggerhead Turtle was looking like being the highlight. After two hours though the wind and swell picked up and a 'crazy' two hours followed with 2 European Storm Petrel, 5 Fea's Petrel, another Wilson's Storm Petrel and then the bird top of everyone's wish list on the boat White-faced Storm Petrel came onto the chum with its amazing trampoline like bouncy flight while feeding. While we were watching the Petrel a 1st summer Sabine's Gull passed over the boat and within a few minutes an adult Long-tailed Skua. On the return voyage large rafts of Cory's Shearwaters started forming and a total of 7

Madeiran Storm Petrel's flew across the boats path. A pod of playful Common Short-beaked Dolphin halted the return trip while a Flying Fish flew over the boat just after dark !



White-faced Storm Petrel

29th May

The first full day on land was rewarded with strong sunshine. On the way west Lugar de Baxio was revisited, 1 Spoonbill remained along with a juvenile Night Heron that had joined the adult.

Ponta do Pargo on the far North West corner holds some scrubland around the lighthouse, Berthelot's Pipit was easy to find and a pair of Spectacled Warblers were tracked down in the gorse. While watching those a Kestrel was hunting and another bird of prey appeared which quickly turned out to be a female Red-footed Falcon (right), the sole remnant of a huge influx of 18 birds the week before. The Falcon provided some stunning views as it landed close by on a fence post before the Kestrel chased it away. Around the lighthouse the Plain Swift were joined by several Barn Swallow.

Walking along the Jardim Levante proved fruitless in the search for Trocaz pigeon but excellent views of Madeiran Firecrest and Madeiran Chaffinch were a good reward. After dark back at the hotel we were rewarded with close flyby views of calling Cory's Shearwater from the balcony.



30th May

Another calm sunny day so a trip to the high tops. More good views of Berthelot's Pipits and Plain Swift on the way up before another attempt to find the Trocaz Pigeon at Balcoes was unsuccessful although the Chaffinch were stunningly tame here. The roadside verges of Ribeiro de Frio at the start of the walk to Balcoes viewpoint held the endemic Madeiran Marsh Orchid and Pride of Madeira which attracted Madeiran Cleopatra butterflies. The return trip was scuppered by encountering the Monte Rally, unadvertised anywhere which resulted in a 2 hour delay in roasting heat. The silver lining to this however was the dead-end we were detoured down to the Pico Alto picnic area disturbed a Trocaz Pigeon from a road side puddle !

After getting back to the hotel another trip out to Ponta de Lourenco in the late afternoon was rewarded with a much quieter track as a result of most walkers having finished and a large flock of Canaries, Goldfinch and Berthelot's Pipit also revealed several Rock Sparrow, one determinedly pursuing a Hummingbird Hawkmoth across the rock face.



Madeiran Chaffinch at Balcoes

31st May

A quieter day on the Sunday with the botanic gardens in Funchal and Monte both visited. The walk to the cable car to the former produced a lone Whimbrel (below) feeding on a roundabout. Blackcap were very visible in both parks as was the sub-species of Robin found on the island and the Madeiran Firecrest was constantly heard.



1st June

A revisit to Ponte do San Lourenco before flying home in the afternoon produced no new species; the sheer volume of people walking the path meant that only Berthelot's Pipit and Canaries were heard.

Overall a very successful trip, the pelagic run by Catarina and Hugo of www.madeirawindbirds.com despite being expensive cannot be recommended enough, their knowledge and identification skills in the deep ocean provided excellent close views of all the specialist seabirds and other wildlife.

Bird Species List - 41

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* – long staying adult on Machico river on 27th & 28th



Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (above) – Seen on all three pelagics and nightly from hotel balcony

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* – 1 on 26th & 28th



Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (above) – On all three pelagics in good numbers

Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* – 1 on pelagic on 26th & 5 on 28th

Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* – 2 on pelagic on 26th

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* – 5 on 26th, 6 on 27th & 2 on 28th

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* – 1 on 27th and 28th

Madeiran Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* – 1 on 27th and 7 on 28th

White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* – 1 on chum on 28th

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* – Adult at Lugar de Baixo on 28th joined by a Juvenile on 29th

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* – 2 at Lugar de Baixo on 28th

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* – 2 at Lugar de Baixo on 28th, 1 on 29th

Buzzard *Buteo buteo* – Machico
 Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – Machico
 Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* – female near Ponte do Pargo lighthouse
 Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – Machico
 Coot *Fulica atra* – 28th & 29th at Lugar de Baixo
 Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – Machico
 Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* – Funchal on 31st
 Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* – adult on 28th
 Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis* – Daily around the harbour and seen on all the pelagics
 Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* – 1st summer on pelagic on 28th
 Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* – Machico
 Trocaz Pigeon *Columba trocaz* – 30th near Pico Alto picnic area
 Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* – 1 on 27th in Funchal



Plain Swift *Apus pallidus* (above) – Daily
 House Martin *Delichon urbicum* – A few hunting on sea front from hotel balcony in Funchal
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Ponte do Pargo lighthouse on 29th
 Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis* – on the barren ground at Ponte do Pargo on 29th
 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* – 27th & 28th
 Robin *Erithacus rubecula* – Botanic Gardens, Funchal on 31st
 Blackbird *Turdus merula cabrerae* - Daily
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla (heineken)* – Seen most days
 Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata bella* – pair walking to Ponte do Pargo lighthouse on 29th
 Madeiran Firecrest *Regulus madeirensis* – 29th, 30th and 31st



Rock Sparrow *Petronia Petronia madeirensis* – 30th at Ponte do San Lourenco
 Madeiran Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis* – 29th & 30th

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis parva* – Machico

Atlantic Canary *Serinus canaria* – Machico on 26, 27 & 28th, Ponte do San Lourenco on 30th & 31st

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* – Machico

Butterflies



Monarch (above) *Danaus plexippus* – Funchal & Machico

Lang's Short Tailed Blue *Leptotes pirithous* - Funchal

Long Tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*

Small White *Artogeia rapae* – Machico riverbed

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea* – Machico riverbed & Ponte do San Lourenco

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* – Most wooded areas now out numbers the Madeiran Speckled Wood

Madeiran Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides* – single on 30th May heading into the mountains

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* – On roadside near the high summit

“Macronesian” Red Admiral *Vanessa vulcania* - On roadside near the high summit

Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleopatra* – Balcoes

Other notable wildlife

Madeiran Wall Lizard *Teira dugesii* – common in the parks of Funchal

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin *Stenella frontalis* – Pelagic on 26th

Blue Shark *Prionace glauca* – Pelagic on 27th

Loggerhead Turtle *Caretta caretta* – Pelagic on 28th

Common Short-beaked Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* – Pelagic on 28th



Madeira Marsh Orchid (below) *Dactyloriza foliosa* - Ribeiro de Frio roadside on 30th