

# BIRDING THE CANARY ISLANDS – JUNE 2017

Written and Photography by Jack Bucknall



The vast landscape of Fuerteventura.

## The Trip:

Between the 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June 2017, myself and Dan McGibbon visited Fuerteventura and Tenerife in the hope of finding the endemic birdlife that the islands hold, as well as other special birds that the islands offer. We found an incredible contrast between the two islands, not only from a wildlife point of view, but also landscape, weather, people and culture. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and relaxing trip, that got us (almost) everything we went for!

We started our trip on Fuerteventura from the 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, then took an internal flight with Binter Canaries to Tenerife North Airport, where we stayed from 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> before flying out Tenerife South Airport back to Newcastle. We had no trouble at all with any of the flights – apart from me picking up the wrong suitcase at Fuerteventura airport but this was soon resolved! We stayed in El Cotillo in the Northern region of Fuerteventura for the first part of our trip, and Buenavista del Norte located in NW Tenerife, close to Punta del Teno. The locations were perfect for what we needed, and especially on Fuerteventura where most of the birding was done without leaving the North.

We hired a car from Orlando Rent-a-Car on both islands – the Fuerteventura one was great, as they had no smaller cars, they gave us a bigger diesel car, and it was fantastic (be aware that some hire companies do not insure you off road, and a lot of sites visited had to be accessed through tracks etc.). The car on Tenerife was a Polo, and was rather beaten up when we got it, but it got us through the few days we were there with no hassle.

Due to the time of year we went, the weather was hot and pretty challenging in the middle of day. This was especially relevant on Fuerteventura where temperatures reached 38°C on one of the days, which made birding extremely difficult. Tenerife was a contrast to this if you were high enough up, as we found foggy conditions to be quite common at higher altitudes, making visibility often impossible – coastal Tenerife was very hot, and was again challenging at times.

Finally, a big thanks to Derek Bradbury who gave us some great sites on Fuerteventura to visit around Tindaya. He also runs a guiding service, which is highly recommended if birding this island in a limited amount of time (<http://www.fuerteventurabirdwatch.co.uk>).

## Trip Itinerary:

22<sup>nd</sup> June – Arrived on Fuerteventura late, and it was 22:30 by the time we got to the hotel in El Cotillo.

23<sup>rd</sup> June – Birding around the Tindaya Plains in the morning, then visited Los Molinos Reservoir in the afternoon.

24<sup>th</sup> June – Seawatching from El Cotillo morning and evening, with a trip to Tindaya Plains in between.

25<sup>th</sup> June – Started again on Tindaya Plains, then headed south to the Vega de Rio Palmas area. Finished at El Cotillo lighthouse seawatching.

26<sup>th</sup> June – Birding around the hotel, then flew to Tenerife early pm. Visited La Grimona Viewpoint on the way from airport.

27<sup>th</sup> June – Started at Zona Recreativa de Chio, visited Barranco de Ruiz, La Grimona Viewpoint and finished at Punta del Teno for a seawatch.

28<sup>th</sup> June – Barranco de Ruiz in the morning, Erjos Pools in the afternoon and again finished at Punta del Teno.

29<sup>th</sup> June – Chanajiga Picnic Site first, then headed south to Golf del Sur before flying home late pm.

## FUERTEVENTURA

### Day 1 – 22<sup>nd</sup> June:

No birding done with late arrival, but we did have a flock of **Pallid Swifts** flying around the terminal building, first bird of the trip!

### Day 2 – 23<sup>rd</sup> June:

We decided to make an early start and explore the area around our hotel in El Cotillo, which backed onto the beach. The first lifer of the trip came in the grounds of our hotel – **Berthelot's Pipit**. This proved to be the first of many, with this species being extremely common on both islands, often very approachable. We also recorded **Hoopoe** on the beach, and several **Cory's Shearwaters** were visible offshore.

We then moved on to the Tindaya Plains, and our first stop was the Tindaya Goat Farm (28.593834, -13.991630). As we pulled up, Dan immediately noticed 2 **Laughing Doves** in a small tree next to the farm buildings; a bird that is generally not recorded that far north. We also had a family party of **Stone Curlew** by the farm and heard a distant **Barbary Partridge** calling. After a while, we moved further onto the plains stopping a few times to scan the landscape for movement. At approximately 28.606823, -14.002956 we stopped suddenly at the sight of another target of ours, a party of 4 **Cream-coloured Coursers** right next to the track – they gradually moved away from the car, but were in no rush and allowed for photographs, one of the more memorable lifers of the trip. We stopped here for a while and in quick succession had another lifer; a group of 7 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were seen quite distantly in flight, but the markings on the birds were still obvious. We also had a large group of 50+ **Lesser Short-toed Larks** flying around the plains, 2 **Spectacled Warblers** called from nearby scrubland, our only sighting of **House Martin** flew over and a sub-adult **Egyptian Vulture** gave us a fairly close fly-by. **Ravens, Berthelot's Pipits**, the island race of **Southern Grey Shrikes** and **Hoopoes** were also common throughout on the plains here. We carried on a little further down the road and stopped the car again and walked onto the plains at approximately 28.615724, -14.021938, here we found very little whilst walking apart from, interestingly enough, a Houbara Bustard feather! This was sadly the closest we got to seeing this island speciality during our stay, and we were later told that the time of year we went was the worst time as they generally move up into the hills for summer (although a friend of ours had a flock of 7 Houbaras in the same spot a week later).



Stone Curlew showing well at Tindaya Goat Farm.



Cream-coloured Courser standing on guard on the Tindaya Plains.



After about half an hour, we moved on to a site just outside the village of Esquinzo, some little freshwater pools at 28.614838, -13.986514 (although be aware that the track was barely passable in our big car). Although the pools were small, they still attracted a few little birds to come down for a drink, the highlight being a flock of 8 **Trumpeter Finches**, another lifer for me, alongside 5 **Linnet**. The pools were especially attractive to dragonflies, and although I wasn't very clued up, Dan informed me that we were watching **Red-veined Darter**, **Scarlet Darter** and **Lesser Emperor**. The pools themselves held our first **Moorhen** of the trip. The highlight of this little site came as we headed back to the car, when our first **Fuerteventura Chat** appeared, a young bird on the fence near the track, albeit very briefly. A surprising number of birds for such a little site!

We moved on again to explore the tracks a little further, and found ourselves at a little stream, with some good looking scrubland near the road at approximately 28.623612, -13.984448 (again note the track was barely passable in places). Here the scrubland held a minimum of 4 **Fuerteventura Chats** which were on show the whole time we were there, as well as good numbers of **Spanish Sparrows**, **Trumpeter Finches** and a pair of **Spectacled Warblers**. The stream itself looked brilliant for passage waders, although we visited at the wrong time for anything unusual, but still managed to see 4 **Little Ringed Plovers** feeding on the muddy banks. An **Egyptian Vulture** gave us a flyover, and a large mixed flock of **Pallid** and **Plain Swifts** circled overhead. By this time, the heat of the midday sun was uncomfortable for birding, so we retreated to the car and decided to head further south.



Pallid Swift showing off some distinctive features.



An inquisitive Spectacled Warbler.

We made our way to Los Molinos Reservoir for the afternoon, again down an off road track to the parking spot (28.512724, -14.031352), but the track was a lot better than the ones we had attempted during the morning. It was a lovely little site that gave us a chance to pick up some water birds that we had not yet had on the trip; the main attraction being massive numbers of **Ruddy Shelduck**, we recorded 85+ birds. The reservoir held birds that we did not record anywhere else on Fuerteventura such as 4 **Grey Herons**, 2 **Little Egrets**, huge numbers of **Coots** (120+ birds) and at least 30 **Black-winged Stilts**. There was also a sizeable collection of **Yellow-legged Gulls** at the south end of the reservoir, and has held a few Audouin's Gulls in the past, but we had no luck with them. The reservoir was also very good for raptors, and as we got back to the car, we noticed a pair of **Barbary Falcons** circling over the parking area. After a while they were joined by a **Common Buzzard** and one of the Falcons began to hunt around the reservoir, swooping down towards the Stilts, great to watch! After about an hour we had seen 4 **Buzzards**, 2 **Barbary Falcons** and a **Kestrel** all around the parking area – certainly a site worth visiting.



Barbary Falcon swooping in on a group of Black-winged Stilts...



...unsuccessfully!

As we left Los Molinos, we spoke to a couple of birders who informed us that they had seen a Houbara Bustard just outside the village of Tindaya that morning, and gave us the co-ordinates of where to look. We drove into the village on our way home and took the road that overlooked some farmland at 28.583179, -13.983099. Despite some good looking habitat, we drew a blank with the Bustard, but did see our first **Barbary Partridges** of the trip with a flock of 10 close to the road. Here we also had our first confirmed **Plain Swifts** of the trip, and although a difficult species to positively ID with the majority being Pallid Swift, the calls of the birds and the small size made for a positive ID.

### Day 3 – 24<sup>th</sup> June:

Following on from a busy previous day, we decided to take it a bit easier and have our first proper seawatch of the trip. We were going to try the lighthouse at El Cotillo, but having read reports saying that it was a struggle to gain any height from the lighthouse, instead we went to the very south of the town and based ourselves on a bench overlooking some very good looking sea cliffs at 28.682768, -14.012947. We began watching at around 9am, and within seconds of setting up the scopes, we had **Cory's Shearwaters** moving, some quite close in to the shore. We began counting the shearwaters, but after 20 minutes it became obvious how extremely common this species is around the Canaries and gave up our count! A **Barbary Falcon** went south along the cliffs which was a nice surprise, but was too quick for my camera. In a couple of hours up to 11am, it was very quiet over the sea apart from thousands (literally) of Cory's, and the occasional **Yellow-legged Gull** to add some variety – we decided at 11am to give it another 15 minutes, then move on elsewhere. Literally seconds after this discussion, I got onto a bird that I knew immediately I had never seen before; and after taking a couple of seconds to process what I was looking at, I shouted **TROPICBIRD!!** After some panic, Dan got onto it and we both enjoyed prolonged views of a gorgeous **Red-billed Tropicbird** as it flew slowly north past us fairly close inshore – I even managed to rattle off some record shots before we lost it to view behind the headland, incredible bird! We decided it was best to give it a little while longer, and unbelievably, about 10 minutes after the first, Dan called a second **Red-billed Tropicbird** going north, this time a lot more distant but still afforded some more prolonged views of this fantastic species! We knew this species was a possibility around Fuerteventura given the public knowledge of a small breeding colony on the island in 2016 (although the site is not public knowledge), but never expected to see any – very good news for the status of Tropicbirds on the Canaries.



My record shot of the first Red-billed Tropicbird, without doubt the bird of the trip.

We gave it another half an hour, but with even the Cory's becoming relatively few and far between, we made our way to the Tindaya Goat Farm again for some afternoon birding. Upon arriving at the goat farm, we were greeted by 10 **Trumpeter Finches** on the fence next to the road, as well as **Spanish Sparrows** and **Collared Doves**. We moved further down the road and out onto the plains; we didn't get very far from the farm before we had a close encounter with a flock of 19 **Barbary Partridges** running across the track in front of us before disappearing onto the plains.



We again saw the family party of **Stone Curlews** near the farm, had a flock of 4 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** fly distantly over and another large flock of **Lesser Short-toed Larks** feeding near the track. A surprise **Cattle Egret** standing on top of one of the ruined buildings on the plains was a surprise – this was the only time we recorded this species during our stay on the islands, and a pair of **Egyptian Vultures** flew over as we watched the Egret. The heat of the early afternoon sun was particularly challenging by this time, so we decided to take a couple of hours break from the birding and carry on in the evening.



Southern Grey Shrike (*koenigi* subspecies) on the Tindaya Plains.



Hoopoe showing well next to the road at Tindaya.

We ventured back out around 6pm when the temperature, although still high, was much easier to bird in. However, before we had made it to the car, we were treated to some great views of a pair of **Fuerteventura Chats** right next to our hotel! Unfortunately, they didn't hang around for a photo on this occasion, so we decided an evening seawatch was the best course of action given our luck that morning; again we made our way to the El Cotillo clifftop at 28.682768, -14.012947 and set up the scopes. Instantly, it was obvious that the **Cory's Shearwaters** had started moving again with birds in view almost everywhere we looked, and large rafts of 200+ birds were forming on the sea as the evening went on. There was again very little variety of seabirds, but the seawatch was brightened up by 5 **Bulwer's Petrels** that went north fairly distantly over a half hour period from 8pm onwards. Just before we left at around 9pm, there was a flock of 100+ Swifts gathering overhead, and within the flock we positively ID'd a few **Plain Swifts** although **Pallid Swifts** were much more numerous.

#### Day 4 – 25<sup>th</sup> June:

Our last full day on the island, so we decided to have one last explore of the Tindaya Plains before heading south and checking out a few sites that had been recommended to us. We started again at Tindaya Goat Farm which was fairly quiet, the family of **Stone Curlews** were still showing near the road. Venturing further onto the plains, we took a left turn along the track and explored the area further west, stopping at approximately 28.599809, -14.003046. Here we recorded a feeding flock of 40+ **Lesser Short-toed Larks**, a male **Trumpeter Finch**, 2 **Hoopoes**, a pair of **Spectacled Warblers** and several **Berthelot's Pipits**. However, the highlight here were the **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** – we spotted several small groups flying low over, and one group in particular allowed some fantastic photo opportunities as they flew very low over the car. We got back in the car, and couldn't believe our luck after 10 minutes when a gorgeous male landed not 20ft away from us, albeit briefly, but long enough to rattle off some photos!



Plenty of fly-overs made for some great views.



A few birds landed close to the car, giving even better views.

After getting our fill with the Sandgrouse, we decided to move on and made our way south to a town called Vega de Rio Palmas, a site recommended to us for Laughing Dove. We parked up in a small layby beside the road at 28.393662, -14.087804, big enough for about 6 cars, and immediately as we arrived, we saw a **Turtle Dove** fly over the car, and a further two males singing on the wires which was a very promising start. We made our way up the Barranco, and immediately picked up 4 **Laughing Doves** in the palm trees near the layby, followed by another 4 birds singing from the hillside along with more **Turtle Doves**. It was a brilliant site for a few species that we had not yet picked up, especially woodland birds such as **African Blue Tit** where at least 4 were present in the trees lining the Barranco. We also had our only sighting of **Goldfinch** here with 10 birds in a flock, along with both **Sardinian** and **Spectacled Warblers** and **Spanish Sparrows**. The heat was getting particularly intense again by this time, so we decided to try another site recommended to us just a little further south.



A pair of Laughing Doves showing well.



Lovely male Spanish Sparrow coming down for a drink.

The final site for our afternoon birding session was Mirador de las Peñitas (28.387188, -14.092185), a little viewpoint just off the main road that is very popular with tourists, not just for the breath-taking views of the scenery, but for the incredibly tame and numerous **Barbary Ground Squirrels**! Great little creatures that are not bothered about people in the slightest, and the same can be said for the **Ravens**, that are equally as tame, and in my opinion, equally as impressive. This was one of my highlights of the trip, I loved just how close we were to the wildlife. The reservoir viewable from the viewpoint held 5 **Coot**, and 2 **Buzzards** circled overhead, as did 2 **Kestrels**.



Barbary Ground Squirrel standing to attention.



One of 8+ Ravens that were also after our food; very impressive birds.

Afterwards, we went back to the apartment for a couple of hours break from the heat, before heading out again on the evening for a seawatch. This time we tried the lighthouse at El Cotillo for a change of scenery, and found the reports to be correct about the lack of height – it made seawatching quite difficult, although we did add a couple of species around the lighthouse. The rocks behind the lighthouse held both **Kentish Plover** and **Whimbrel**, which were added bonuses, and even with the lack of height, we still recorded **Cory's Shearwaters** at a rate of 27 birds per minute.



**Day 5 – 26<sup>th</sup> June:**

Our final few hours on Fuerteventura was spent birding the wasteland and beaches around our hotel in El Cotillo. The land was rich with bird life, with **Spectacled Warblers**, **Spanish Sparrows** and **Berthelot's Pipits** pretty common, including some excellent views of the Pipits; a species that we found to be very confiding, and on this occasion, sat up nicely for a photo in the morning sun! The highlight of the morning was re-finding the resident pair of **Fuerteventura Chats** on the wasteland beside the road (28.691168, -14.011163) which, with a bit of patience, showed equally as well at the Pipit; nice to get some close views of this sought after endemic in our last few hours!



The common and widespread Berthelot's Pipit.



Male Fuerteventura Chat right outside the hotel.

## Fuerteventura Classified List

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

At least 85 birds on Los Molinos Reservoir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*

One heard from Tindaya Goat Farm, and a flock of 10 just outside Tindaya on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A flock of 19 on Tindaya Plains on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii*

5 flew past El Cotillo on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*

Very common offshore, especially in the evenings, our most numerous bird of the trip by far.

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus*

2 flew past El Cotillo on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

1 on the Tindaya Plains on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

2 at Los Molinos Reservoir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

4 at Los Molinos Reservoir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*

A sub-adult flew over the Tindaya Plains, and a sub-adult flew over Esquinzo on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A pair over the Tindaya Plains on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo insularum*

Fairly common and widespread.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*

Common and widespread, noted daily.

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*

A pair at Los Molinos on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a single bird flying along the cliffs at El Cotillo on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula ochropus*

One on a small pool near Esquinzo on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Coot** *Fulicula atra*

Very common at Los Molinos Reservoir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 5 at Mirador de las Peñitas on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

30+ at Los Molinos Reservoir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus*

Fairly common on the plains, and a family party at Tindaya Goat Farm every day.

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor*

4 on the Tindaya Plains on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

4 near Esquinzo on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.



**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

One at El Cotillo lighthouse on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

One at El Cotillo lighthouse on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis atlantis*

Common in all coastal areas.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*

Seen daily in small numbers on the Tindaya Plains, often fly-overs only.

**Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

Common and widespread.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common and widespread.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

15+ at Vega de Rio Palmas on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

2 at Tindaya Goat Farm on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 10+ at Vega de Rio Palmas on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor*

Small numbers noted at various sites, often in amongst Pallid Swift flocks.

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*

Common and widespread.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

Fairly common in various habitats.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens polatzeki*

Large flocks were present on the Tindaya Plains, noted every day.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*

One over the Tindaya Plains on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was our only sighting.

**Berthelot's Pipit** *Anthus berthelotii*

Common and widespread.

**Fuerteventura Chat** *Saxicola dacotiae*

We found this species fairly straight forward in the right habitat, with 5 at Esquinzo on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a pair on the wasteland next to our El Cotillo hotel from the 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*

2 at Vega de Rio Palmas on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*

Fairly common and widespread in right habitat.

**African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae degener*

4 at Vega de Rio Palmas on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor koenigi*

Common and widespread, especially on the plains.

**Raven** *Corvus corax tingitanus*  
Common and widespread.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*  
Common and widespread.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis parva*  
A flock of 10+ at Vega de Rio Palmas on the 25<sup>th</sup> was our only sighting.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina harterti*  
5 at Esquinzo on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus amantum*  
Reasonably common on the plains, with Tindaya Goat Farm being a good site to see this species.



## TENERIFE

We flew from Fuerteventura early that afternoon with Binter Canaries, and less than an hour later, touched down at Tenerife North airport. Another quick and easy transaction for our hire car, and we made our way towards Buenavista del Norte, our home town for 3 nights. Our accommodation was about an hour from the airport, and we noticed that we would be passing La Grimona Viewpoint on our route, a well-known site for both endemic Pigeon species. About 45 minutes after leaving the airport, we arrived at the viewpoint, and pulled our car to the side of the road into the pull-in at 28.392778, -16.608833. Although the viewpoint is literally on the main road that runs along the North coast of the island, we had been recommended this site by several birders plus guidebooks so we gave it a go. Looking over the road and up a dense cliff face, the area did look excellent and unbelievably, within half a minute, I had called the first **Laurel Pigeon**, flying along the cliff face before disappearing into the thick cover! The more distinctive of the two sought after endemics, with their very dark plumage (looks black at times) and very white tail-band. Some of the reports we had read suggested that Bolle's Pigeon was the easier and commoner of the two Laurel species, but we found quite the opposite during our few days on the island, and in an hour of standing at the viewpoint, we had over 15 sightings of **Laurel Pigeon**, and none of Bolle's Pigeon. We also recorded our first **Atlantic Canaries** of the trip at the viewpoint with a flock of 4 birds at the base of the cliff face; here we also recorded our first **Blackbird**! 10 **Plain Swifts** were overhead, and we had a glance out to sea, and although it was quiet, we still had 30 **Cory's Shearwaters** offshore. **Tenerife Lizards** were in abundance here just over the wall next to the car.

We moved on and headed for our hotel, arriving just before dark. Our apartment was fantastic, with some great views of a valley, and some small trees close to our balcony. We settled ourselves in, sat on the balcony and were soon joined by a **Turtle Dove** on a nearby power line, and also saw our first **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** of the trip. Around half an hour later, when it was completely dark, to our surprise we heard the very distinctive call of a **Long-eared Owl** very close to the balcony. It called pretty constantly for at least an hour while we were listening, and we heard it every night we were there after that in the same place, not a bad garden bird... shame we never saw it!

### Day 6 – 27<sup>th</sup> June

We started the day on the balcony with our breakfast scanning the trees to see if we could see the Long-eared Owl roosting, but no luck. However, we still had plenty birds in our 'back garden' adding **Blackcap** to the trip list with 3 birds seen, and 6 **Ring-necked Parakeets** were flying around which was an unexpected bonus. 5 **Atlantic Canaries**, 2 **African Blue Tits**, and 2 **Spectacled Warblers** were also seen, and the **Turtle Dove** was again on the same power line.

After breakfast, we decided to head up into the hills in search of the endemic Blue Chaffinch. We knew of the Las Lajas picnic site, but had also read that it got very busy at times, so we decided to try out the other well-known site for this species – Zona Recreativa de Chio, another small picnic area with much less people. We arrived on site at around mid-day, and upon pulling into the car park (28.267314, -16.747410), the first bird we saw was a male **Blue Chaffinch** flying down to drink from a nearby tap, a promising start! We decided to position ourselves on a picnic bench near a tap with a small pool of water underneath it, and in a couple of hours here, we saw 15 **Blue Chaffinches**, some giving very close views coming to drink from the pool. We also added 5 **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** and **Grey Wagtail** to the trip list, both of which are endemic subspecies of Tenerife, as well as 7 **Atlantic Canaries** and a **Canary Islands Chiffchaff**. The Woodpeckers were also visiting the pool allowing us some close views and nice photo opportunities.



Male Blue Chaffinch feeding under the picnic tables.



Great Spotted Woodpecker of the subspecies *canariensis*.

Having seen the Blue Chaffinch, we decided to turn our attention back to trying for the endemic Bolle's Pigeon. Heading back towards the coast, we tried out Barranco de Ruiz, another site for both Pigeons. We parked in the car park at 28.391323, -16.626391, and walked south up the Barranco to the first obvious viewpoint looking straight up the valley. Again, within minutes we saw a **Laurel Pigeon** flying between trees and about 5 minutes later, we got some brief but fantastic views of a second bird perched up very near the viewpoint – I fired off some phone-scoped record shots before it flew back up the valley, great stuff! In half an hour, we saw 6 **Laurel Pigeons** in the valley and 6 **Plain Swifts** overhead as well as a **Buzzard** and 2 **Kestrels** – still no luck with the supposedly more numerous of the two endemic Pigeons!



The best views we got of the very timid Laurel Pigeon.

We headed just along the road again to La Grimona Viewpoint, and agreed to give it a good amount of time to give us the best chance at Bolle's Pigeon. 10 **Atlantic Canaries** greeted us as we pulled up, as did 10 **Plain Swifts** above the layby. We watched the cliff-face between 16:00-17:00, and were once again blown away by just how common **Laurel Pigeons** actually are in the right habitat. We had over 30 sightings of Laurels in the hour, including 2 birds perched up together. Then finally at 16:50, I got on a Pigeon flying low down the cliff-face that I immediately knew was not a Laurel Pigeon. It was much lighter in plumage, and as it turned and came past me, I saw the grey bar across the tail and the light grey upperwings... "**BOLLE'S PIGEON! BOLLE'S GOING LEFT LOW DOWN!**" I shouted to Dan, who got on the bird just at the last second before it disappeared behind the edge of the cliff – all our efforts had finally paid off, and the whole event was over in about 5 seconds! If reports were to be believed, Bolle's was meant to be the easier of the two, and the more numerous in population; this was certainly not the case in our experience! Not quite believing our luck, and both endemic Pigeons seen, we agreed we'd had enough of looking at Pigeons for the day. We headed to the NW tip of Tenerife to the well-known seawatching spot of Punta Del Teno for the last couple of hours of light.

I had read reports that said this site was the best in Tenerife for seeing Little Shearwater, a species that both of us wanted to see, and that the last hour of light was best for seeing them. So, we pulled up at the car park at 28.343154, -16.919942, and headed for the rocks around the lighthouse – the view was brilliant, and the site looked fantastic for seawatching, so we positioned ourselves as near to the lighthouse as we could and began watching. Much like our other experiences of seawatching on this trip, the sea was pretty quiet, with only the very common **Cory's Shearwaters** and the occasional **Yellow-legged Gull** seen – we left at dusk, after giving it 90 minutes. A pair of **Kestrels** and mixed flock of 5 **Plain Swift** and 5 **Pallid Swift** kept us entertained. The **Long-eared Owl** was again calling from our balcony when we got back.

## Day 7 – 28<sup>th</sup> June

The day started again on the balcony in the company of a large flock of **Plain Swifts**, a **Blackbird** and 2 **Blackcaps**. After breakfast, we decided to see if we could get some better views of Bolle's Pigeon, so we headed for Barranco de Ruiz again, this time from the top of the valley parking in a layby at 28.376346, -16.626238. Leaving the car, we got some more nice views of a large flock of **Plain Swifts**, 2 **Kestrels** and a **Barbary Falcon** was circling overhead which made for a promising start to the day. We walked down the nearby path, and got ourselves a vantage point overlooking at Barranco, which was sadly covered in mist; we could just make out the far side of the valley, but certainly not enough to pick up any birds in. We decided to give it a little while, but it wasn't looking very hopeful, however a close fly-by from the only **Sparrowhawk** of the trip gave us some hope. After a few minutes, we saw the first **Laurel Pigeon** of the day fly underneath us at very close range, giving brilliant flight views, and in the next 10 minutes we saw a further 6 **Laurel Pigeons** flying pretty close, some disappearing into the mist. Then, just as we were beginning to give up and come back later, we got onto a close **Bolle's Pigeon** flying underneath us, albeit briefly before it disappeared into the trees again – at least we'd finally had some fairly good views. In the bushes around the vantage point, we had 2 **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** and 4 **African Blue Tits**. As we made our way back up the path towards the car, I heard a call that I immediately recognised; a **Quail** was singing from the mist, somewhere on the other side of the valley, distant but distinctive!



We decided to leave, as the mist was making it particularly challenging, and head for another well-known site on Tenerife; Erjos Pools (another site for Bolle's Pigeon). The site was accessible via a little track, but we decided not to risk it in our car, and just parked in the village of Erjos de el Tanque and walked 5 minutes to the pools which are situated at 28.319505, -16.808900. As we walked towards the pools, the number of butterflies on the wing was quite amazing; we never really took much notice of the butterflies elsewhere in all honesty, but took note of a few species here. **Clouded Yellows** were abundant, as were **Canary Islands Large Whites** and we saw a few **Bath Whites** also – we should have taken a bit more notice elsewhere! The pools themselves were very quiet, although we did hear our only **Common Sandpiper** of the trip here, but failed to see it. **Moorhen**, 2 **Grey Wagtails** and **Grey Heron** were the only 'water-birds' present, however the surrounding trees held good numbers of **Canaries**, **Canary Islands Chiffchaffs**, **African Blue Tits** and 2 **Linnets**. We had a couple of hours here scanning the hillside for Pigeons, but saw none and headed back to Barranco de Ruiz for what would be our last look for them.



The fairly common Bath White.



Extremely common Clouded Yellow.

The fog had lifted from the valley when we arrived at 3pm, making visibility much better. We began scanning the areas where we had seen the Bolle's Pigeon earlier, and found it to be much quieter (maybe something to do with the time of day) but still managed to see a single **Laurel Pigeon** flying across the barranco in a 45-minute watch. 3 **Barbary Falcons** were circling in the air together which was a nice sight, and our first (and last) **Robin** of the trip was in the bushes next to the car! We also saw our first **Chaffinches** of the trip here, the rather striking *tintillon* subspecies. The **Quail** was still singing from the (now visible) farmland on the east side of Barranco de Ruiz.

We finished our last day on the island again seawatching from Punta del Teno in a last attempt for Little Shearwater. We set up scopes with about 90 minutes of light left; it was again pretty quiet, although the ever-present stacks of **Cory's Shearwaters** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** kept us entertained. Two **Kestrels** were showing very well on the cliffs right below us, and in the evening light made for some nice photo opportunities. After about half an hour of seawatching, Dan called a smaller bird flying SE with a group of **Cory's** but lost it almost immediately – he suspected that it was in fact a Little Shearwater, but couldn't be certain on the brief views. That was until 15 minutes later, when Dan again called 2 smaller birds flying SE, this time closer in – **Little Shearwaters** for sure! He watched the birds for 5 or 6 seconds whilst frantically trying to get me onto them (I failed miserably) before they were again lost to view. We spent the next hour, up until it was almost pitch black, seeing if we could pick up any more Little Shearwaters, but my luck had run out, and I left empty-handed... well done to Dan for getting them though, a welcome addition to the trip list!

On returning to the apartment, the **Long-eared Owl** was once again in full voice...





Great views of the *canariensis* subspecies of Kestrel at Punta del Teno.

### Day 8 – 29<sup>th</sup> June

Our last day of the holiday, so over breakfast we discussed the plan of action, trying to think if there was anything we had missed. We decided that the only bird we had not yet seen on the island was the Tenerife Goldcrest. Reading several trip reports, it was suggested that Chanajiga Picnic Site in the highlands of N Tenerife was a good site to try for them, as well as other woodland birds. We arrived at the car park at 28.343990, -16.584595 mid-morning, and immediately were greeted with the sounds of singing **Canary Islands Chiffchaffs** in great numbers, surprisingly common at this site, as were **African Blue Tits** which showed well around the car parking area. After 20 minutes of searching the picnic areas, we eventually had some good views of two **Tenerife Goldcrests**, calling to one another – we didn't find this species to be as common as suggested although did not venture very far from the car park. We again saw the *tintillon* subspecies of **Chaffinch** here in good numbers, and a very vocal male **Greenfinch** calling in the car park, our only sighting of the trip. We again encountered several species of butterfly here, including **Bath White**, **Canary Blue** and **Brimstone**. We were conscious of the time at this stage as despite flying into the North airport of Tenerife, we were flying back home from the South Airport, so we had to get to the other side of the island in plenty time to take the car back etc. We left with enough time to call in at a couple of sites on the south coast to finish off our holiday, encountering a very tame **Turtle Dove** in the middle of the road as we left Chanajiga, and didn't move even when I opened my window for a few shots!



African Blue Tit showing well, fairly numerous at this site.



Brimstone butterflies were also quite common at Chanajiga.

We finished our holiday in a more touristy environment of Tenerife, visiting Golf del Sur for our last couple of hours. The site was productive holding species we hadn't seen many of on the island, as well as being very picturesque. We parked in a car park at 28.039800, -16.612700 (there was nothing to say we couldn't park here, I believe it was a hotel car park), and walked into the wasteland area to the north of the golf course. We had read this area was good for **Barbary Partridges**, and we were not disappointed as we disturbed a party of around 15 birds from approximately 28.041591, -16.609902 (near 3 obvious white silos). This wasteland was also rich with **Berthelot's Pipits** and **Spanish Sparrows**. By walking to the east end of this wasteland, we had a much better view of the golf course itself, and to our surprise, we immediately found another party of 30+ **Barbary Partridges** feeding on the course, giving great scope views; this is definitely the site to go for this species in our experience. Also present here were 2 **Hoopoes**, 2 **Grey Wagtails** and 10 **Moorhens** were visible on the small pond in the NW corner of the course – and in addition to previous butterflies, we also had a smart **Monarch** on the wing here. We flew back to Newcastle Airport mid-afternoon.



Turtle Dove showing well on the road near Chanajiga.



Monarch at Golf del Sur.

## Tenerife Classified List

**Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*

40+ at Golf del Sur on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

A male singing at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*

Very common offshore, especially in the evenings, our most numerous bird of the trip by far.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus baroli*

3 past Punto del Teno on the 28<sup>th</sup> evening.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

One at Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo insularum*

Fairly common and widespread.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

One at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*

Common and widespread, noted daily.

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*

One at La Grimona on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 3 at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup> and one at Chanajiga on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula ochropus*

2 at Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 10+ at Golf del Sur on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actithis hypoleucos*

2 at Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis atlantis*

Common in all coastal areas.

**Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

Common and widespread.

**Laurel Pigeon** *Columba junoniae*

Commoner than expected, easy at La Grimona Viewpoint, and numerous in Barranco de Ruiz on all visits.

**Bolle's Pigeon** *Columba bollii*

Harder than expected, one at La Grimona Viewpoint on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and one at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common and widespread.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

One at Buenavista del Norte on 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> and one near Chanajiga on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus canariensis*

One called every night of our stay at Buenavista del Norte.

**Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor*

Common and widespread.

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*

5 at Punta del Teno on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

2 at Golf del Sur on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major canariensis*

5 at Zona Recreativa de Chio on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Berthelot's Pipit** *Anthus berthelotii*

Common and widespread.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea canariensis*

One at Zona Recreativa de Chio on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 2 at Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Golf del Sur on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula superbus*

One at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula cabrerae*

Fairly common and widespread.

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*

2 at Buenavista del Norte on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla heineken*

Between 2-3 seen on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> at Buenavista del Norte.

**Canary Islands Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus canariensis*

Fairly common and widespread, especially at Chanajiga and Zona Recreativa de Chio.

**'Tenerife' Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus teneriffae*

2 at Chanajiga on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae degener*

Fairly common and widespread.

**Raven** *Corvus corax tingitanus*

One flew over Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*

Common and widespread.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs tintillon*

Two at Barranco de Ruiz on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and common at Chanajiga on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue Chaffinch** *Fringilla teydea*

At least 15 birds were present at Zona Recreativa de Chio on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina harterti*

2 at Erjos Pools on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris aurantiiventris*

A male was at Chanajiga on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Atlantic Canary** *Serinus canaria*

Common and widespread.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*

6 flew over Buenavista del Norte on the 27<sup>th</sup>.